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SKETCHES FROM LIFE;

BY THE LATE

LAMAN BLANCHARD:

With a Memoir of the Author,

BY

SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON, BART.

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EMBELLISHED WITH A PORTRAIT, AFTER A DRAWING BY DANIEL MACLISE, R.A. AND SEVERAL WOOD ENGRAVINGS, FROM DESIGNS BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK, KENNY MEADOWS, AND FRANK STONE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CONFESSIONS OF A KEYHOLE.

INTRODUCTORY.

I AM a native of London, and was bored about a century ago. I am not ashamed to say that originally I was of a circular form, and of a size quite inconsiderable compared with my present dimensions, being intended simply to give effect to the spring of a latch; but a change came o'er the spirit of the house (I believe this is the modern style) with which I am connected,

and some interesting events rendering a lock necessary, I was subsequently raised to the dignity of a keyhole.

The great powers that govern alike the destinies of keyholes and kings, may be supposed to have little favoured me. It was certainly not my fate to be cut in solid fine mahogany, or glorious old oak; to be fashioned in any substance resembling ebony, ivory, or mother of pearl; to be wrought in the precious metals, or even to be encircled and set off with fanciful ornaments, bronze or gilt: I have heard of silver keys, but no key of that kind ever came near me. I cannot boast of being the medium of a statesman's entrance to his study, or of a beauty's entrance to her boudoir. Plain uses and plain appearances are all I pretend to.

I am as far removed however from the gloomy hovel of one district as from the gloomier hell of another; and I ever thanked fortune, from the moment when the air of heaven first found a clear passage through me, for having placed me among the middle classes; neither in a parish-union nor a palace; neither in a miser's chest nor a church door; not so high up as the garret of a philosopher, nor so low down as the cellar of a five-bottle blockhead; neither in the prison of an honest debtor, nor in a grinding usurer's country-box.

I may add, if a little more breath may be allowed me on this point, that although it is the luck of one keyhole to be cut in the door of a harem, and of another in the door of a green-room; while this has its lot in the gate of the foundling-hospital, and a second gapes in the door of some sworn bachelor's cold and comfortless dormitory; these opposite situations, abounding as they may with the means of gratifying curiosity, and awakening moral reflections, are in truth anything but enviable. To a keyhole of a sensitive turn a post in a quiet private family is the most desirable: at a distance,

on the one hand, from the dreary still-life and newsless monotony of a deserted barrister's chamber, unlocked once a day; and on the other, from the wear and tear attendant upon a connexion with an elderly lady's cordial closet, opened every ten minutes.

But it must be owned that there are a thousand positions more favourable than my own to the picking up of secrets, and the whispering of strange news. What mysterious and heart-rending revelations—what tender and exciting confessions—what unexpected and terrible disclosures, might myriads of my brethren make if they disburdened themselves of that secret information which is stored in their small but wonder-treasuring recesses!

In the case of a poor-box the key-hole might have no story to tell; a jingling note resounding through it now and then would be as much as it could give tidings of. But let it be the strong-box of a savings-bank, and if it gave forth any sound at all, what affecting, what ennobling histories should we hear of! daily, hourly acts of self-denial and abstinence; of industry and toil the most patient, hopeful and unresting; of constant struggles with want, and frequent triumphs; of hard but cheerful efforts to withhold from the eager clutch and hungry maw of the present a morsel for the hurrying future; of resolutions heroically held through all temptations, and a spirit of independence unconquerable even in the most trying condition of servitude!

Or say that it be the tin japanned box of a lawyer, having the date of the year painted on it, with two or three initials, contrived to explain nothing. Of what broken fortunes do those mortgage-deeds speak!—of what broken hearts perhaps those marriage settlements! Or suppose it to be the jewel-box of the wife referred to in those matrimonial documents; when with feverish,

trembling hands, and sighs of bitter anguish, remorse, and fiercely struggling pride, she locks up its horrible emptiness, to conceal from a suspecting husband the absence of those love-gifts now gone to pay the humiliating debt of reckless dissipation, or vainly to purchase at treacherous hands a temporary security for shivering honour.

Or imagine it to be the writing-desk of the suspecting husband himself, with its epistolary store of profound secrets, the correspondence of the last divinity that had won him, all susceptibility, to her worship, or the confounded packet of long bills just discharged on the score of Mademoiselle.

If instead of relating my own experiences it were my purpose to speculate on the secrets which other keyholes may have collected, tragedies as dire and mysterious, as blood-curdling as any ever acted in Blue-Beard's chamber, might be found lurking near very unlikely locks, and whispers of them might be caught coming through very ordinary looking apertures. It might be by no means necessary to repair for appalling tales of suffering, told only in sighs and groans, to the keyhole of the condemned cell, with its lonely inmate, or to the gate of the many-peopled and yet more desolate hospital. No, by the common till; the cash-box of a pawnbroker, opened every minute in the day; at the closed inner door of a gambling house, past which one continual stream of life flows unobservingly on for ever; at the locked and sealed-up lid of a Minister's red-box, borne by a heedless and insensible official to its sacred destination—but with any secrets in this latter quarter it is best perhaps to have nothing to do. When the contents transpire in the regular way, that will doubtless be quite time enough for most people.

"What hidest thou in thy treasure caves and cells,"

thou keyhole in the door of the Cabinet council-chamber! Yet catch thou not the question. Curiosity stops her ear as a draught of communicative air steals murmuringly through, and Wisdom ventures not to peep out at even the most cautious corner of his eye!

Make revelations of the exclusive doings ye witness, of the muttered irregularities within, ye keyholes of vestries held with closed doors, public assemblies where reporters are Marplots!

And oh! ye privileged keyholes, peculiar to snug little tea-parlours where eternal Gossip loves at appointed hours to assemble her clacking chattering crew over the uninebriating three cups,—give up your hosts of little secrets, and take a breath of fresh air for the first time these forty years.

You too, keyholes cut in quiet back drawing-rooms, and dressing-rooms where privacy is ever securely lodged—in those safest and most comfortable corners of the house, be they high or low, wherein Slander is best pleased to ensconce herself, and whisper to one edified disciple, or to a wondering, worshipping dozen, as the case may happen, all the foreign and domestic news of the dressing, dining, dancing world around—give out now but an echo of the myriads of unwritten and incredible novels packed up in the air that fills you.

The groans of unfortunate reputations stabbed ruthlessly in your presence, the last dying speeches of spotless and irreproachable characters suddenly cut off in their bloom, the heavy sighs of the more tender-hearted proselytes of scandal, compelled (by their regard for truth) to ruin the fair fame of a family they are really so much attached to; these, with the sound of a half-suppressed giggle, and the exclamation "What a shame!" in a serious elderly tone now and then, are among the precious secrets with which, all ye keyholes,

ye are stored—as a shell is with sea-music when held close to the ear.

I may here close my introductory speculations with the general remark, that as no human face divine ever passed before the mortal gaze that was not well worth looking at, for some odd reason or other, so no keyhole in Christendom or out of it was ever cut, bored, or chiselled, that was not, for some similar odd reason, worth peeping into or listening at. It is a conviction in this truth that encourages me to proceed with my narrative.

PART I.

CAPTAIN FLINT.

The apartment to which I was an appurtenance, and in behalf of whose tenants in endless succession I was to discharge such important and necessary functions, was at first let with other rooms as lodgings. I remember the workmen coming to fit up and furnish, and from them I heard the praises of the tenant, even before he had taken up his abode in my vicinity.

He was a prodigious favourite with everybody; that was evident before he appeared. Captain Flint smiled, spoke, moved, lived, only to fascinate. High and low were alike caught—the great marquis and the poor mechanic. There was a general conspiracy among the tradesmen to have the place completed — not half finished—by the appointed hour; they would not disoblige so sweet-tempered and affable a customer for twice the amount of their profits. Curtains should be put up and carpets down, whether there happened to be time enough or not. As for Peggy, who was dusting everything as if for sheer pleasure, prematurely before

the workmen had departed; she vowed by her quarter's wages she would dust the tips of her fingers off rather than leave a single speck anywhere within sight, to offend the dear, smiling blue eyes of a captain, who seemed to have collected whatever was brilliant, handsome, and seductive in the whole British army, into that one pair of gracious sparklers.

But it was not merely Peggy and the workpeople who were smitten; the landlord came up with an eager and anxious countenance, as if he were looking for his rent beforehand; but in truth he only came to hurry on proceedings, lest so kind and charming a lodger should find anything to complain of. And yet what an idle thought, said the good man to himself. *He* complain! with such a face as that! I defy him!

On one thing, or rather two, as I could plainly overhear, all the gossippers were agreed; and these were—that whereas my master was by far the sweetest-tempered, the most affable, and the most amiable of mortals then existing, his wife was assuredly altogether as sour—an icicle too cold to be melted by the sunbeam she had married—a shrewish thing unconscious of the rare felicity of her lot in possessing, with the husband for life, the fond perpetual lover—a knowing hypocritical little fury, obstinately bent on remaining insensible to the blessing of having an angel for her lawfully-wedded partner.

"A real angel," cried Peggy, perfectly bewitched, "if he's a man!"

And at length when all was complete, up came the expected lodgers, ushered in by "my landlord;" the captain in his turn introducing half a dozen friends, who came to favour him with their opinions touching colours, contrasts, patterns, and proportions.

A general cry of "beautiful!" "charming!" conveyed at the first survey of the apartment a verdict of approval, and several glowing faces, turning rapidly from this side to that, expressed in looks the same decision wherever their glances fell. What the captain's face said, however, I could not see, for his back was towards me; but just at the moment I caught that which could scarcely be less expressive than his best holiday looks—the tones of the sweetest, softest, silveriest voice conceivable, and yet withal quite manly and unaffected.

"My dear," said the beautiful winning voice, "I hope you will find something to approve in the arrangement. It is not complete, you know, until you sanction it with a smile."

The dulcet words were addressed to his wife, and Mrs. Flint did smile; she did more, for she delivered her opinion in a low quiet voice, as if not much moved by the exhibition which delighted others, and indeed little addicted to raptures at any time, to the effect that she thought it all very pleasing, and quite as it should be; an expression of approval which certainly did not harmonise exactly with the chorus of "charming!" "perfect!" and therefore had a rather cold and dissatisfied twang in it.

The face of my mistress was visible to me as she spoke, and a very pretty face—nay, a lovely one it must once have been. I use the past tense, for although it had still youth in it, it had seen its best days. What could have left it young, and yet have stripped it of the glow and the grace of the early time, when the heart's freshest hues flush the beautiful cheek, and the whiteness of the unsinning soul has its outward and visible sign on the fair, lovely, open brow—when the hope that

lights up all within is seen in the sunny smile, and the leap of the happy blood is in the giddy, sudden, joyous laugh!

Can it be, I mused within myself—can it be her indomitable shrewishness that has cast the pale premature shadow upon her brow, that is giving by rapid degrees a sunken form to her cheek, that invests her pretty mouth with a sadness not untouched with pain, and conveys it into her eyes? no, there is nothing like the spirit of a shrew lingering in those patient passionless orbs, which reveal so little of any emotion or trouble in the inner nature, and tell rather of faded fires than flashes and gusts to be dreaded now. It must have been a raging volcano to have burnt out so soon. Perhaps she helped to put it out with floods of savage tears on finding herself unable to spoil her doting husband's temper. Her flames have turned to ice, and she is simply cold, sullen, and discontented; ah! I said so, she is at this moment finding fault.

"If I may," remarked the lady of the lodgings, at that moment, in the same quiet tones, "suggest an improvement, I think it might be effected by hanging the picture lower; at present it is in a false light, and the effect is disadvantageous."

"The picture," thus adverted to by Mrs. Flint, was no other than a portrait of the captain, an acknowledgedlikeness of the All-admired, and the company with one accord turned to look at the masterpiece. Each gazed with rapturous admiration, as each had done a hundred times before, at the brilliant canvas whereon rested the placid and undelighted eyes of Mrs. Flint; and then each directed a glance at the face of that pensive critic, in which there was no touch of idolatry expressed, and, what awakened their wonder more, no character of scorn or disgust either.

"How astonishingly she contrives to hide her hatred and malice," said each of the company in significant looks to the other. "The portrait is in the very happiest light, and with that demure visage she proposes to destroy its effect! Well, of all women in the world—"

But of all men in the world, Captain Flint, at that instant, looked the handsomest and the happiest. As he, too, turned towards the portrait, his face flashed in the direction of the door, and if a sunbeam had darted through me, I could not have felt more suddenly illuminated. His countenance, it is no exaggeration to say, was suffused with the light of an enthusiastic, an unclouded mind. It was—if a keyhole may be allowed the expression—it was one smile. It had been dipped in rose-water, and had caught not only the sweetness of the flower, but the tints of it. With what a glow of pure affection and gratitude it recognised the tender interest which Mrs. Flint had taken in the position of his worthless portrait, yet not wholly worthless since she had bestowed her first inquiring thoughts upon it, and wished to see it more advantageously placed.

He did not utter a syllable, for words, though delivered in the most melodious tones, must have feebly expressed his emotions; but he thanked her in more eloquent silence with his eyes—such eyes!—and then with his hands; between which he pressed for a moment one of hers, that trembled a little as he raised it almost reverentially to his lips. In fact, I expected for a brief second to see lips meeting lips; but perhaps his ardent feelings were restrained by the presence of company, or he might have been deterred by the calm look which his wife bent upon his fond and beaming face, as she gently turned aside her head, and, still unmoved, appeared to be tracing the intricate pattern of the new carpet.

All eyes observed the graceful action of the captain, the air of devotion, of idolatrous affection even, which he assumed as if by an instinct of his superior nature; and no eyes then, save those of the wife herself, were deficient in very obvious signs of admiration.

And now, as though raised beyond his ordinary spring of spirits, by a feeling of hilarity on taking possession of his new residence, by the well-understood sentiment with which his gentle wife had hallowed the hearthstone by which he was to sit, and by the presence of friends willing, not only to be pleased, but charmed, he gave a loose to his powers of entertaining. With inexhaustible variety he led from one form of pleasantry to another, and touched in turn on the topic most acceptable to each of his guests. The rich chocolate, the fine wine, the dainty liqueur, wanted sparkle and fragrance in comparison with his jest and sentiment. The current of his gay humour was a constant flow, yet a constant change; so that the listener might break in at any point he pleased, and join in the rattle, or sit contentedly and laugh. He dealt out compliments, impromptu, equal almost to Mr. Pope's, and if Sir Richard had been there, he would have started off home, earlier than the rest, to write *Tatlers* from recollection.

But the real charm of his wit consisted less in its brilliancy than in its delightful temper. It was the suavity, more even than the mirth and gaiety of his manner, that flung its spell over the room, and made life, where he was, a comedy on which there was no curtain to fall. Mere wit may become wearisome, but good humour and joyous frankness never.

In the exercise of these qualities, in the easy display of a series of delicate and polished courtesies, felt rather than observed, the time flew; and the guests, forgetful of the playhouse and Ranelagh, protracted their in-

tended visit of an hour far into the evening; when amidst a shower of merry laughs and anticipations of the coming housewarming, mingled with more formal ceremonials and adieus, they broke away, to sing to the world the praises of Captain Flint; adding to these, their especial wonder, that a creature so perfectly enchanting should be so perfectly enchanted with his wife—and such a wife.

No sooner had the last parting word been uttered, no sooner at least had the door been closed, than a shadow fell across the apartment, gloomy as it was sudden—as though the lights had all gone out with the guests. I peeped round, curious to know the cause, and saw it in the altered visage of my master. Yes, his face literally darkened the room. I felt a shiver run through me at the startling, the fearful change.

It was not that to the glittering play of fancy and the flash of merriment, an expression of weariness had succeeded; that the bright eye looked sleepy; that the smiling mouth had fallen under the influence of a yawn; that the human machine had been screwed up a little too high, so that the reaction had come heavily and at once. There was no trace of this ordinary exhaustion of the animal powers in that scowling brow and that coarse sullen mouth. On the contrary, there was an indefinable quality in them that denoted vigour and full consciousness, and seemed to say that *this* was the natural character of the face.

Could it be, then, that as the glad, frank, fine-tempered air which had for hours overspread his features, disappeared with his visitors, a mere mask had fallen off! Was the man visible now, while the actor only had appeared before! If so, there was nothing fabulous about Spenser's bird that transformed itself into a hedgehog. But a minute ago he was state-coachman

to Cinderella, mounted on the box of a fairy chariot, and now behold him nothing but a large rat.

That model of politeness and prince of good fellows, Captain Flint, having placed his back to the fire for a few seconds, and directed a few supercilious glances round the apartment, settled his look at length upon his silent partner, who sat with a resigned air and lids bent downwards, at a respectful distance. With that mysterious sympathy which enables people to feel that they are being looked at, she then raised her eyes to meet the gaze of her guardian adorer, the man whom all the world said she had positively bewitched; but although there happened to be nothing in his features just then that could possibly delight her, there was evidently nothing to surprise. Whatever character they wore, it was an expression she seemed used to, and she merely dropped her eyes again, without evincing any emotion, unless the lowest, faintest sigh in the world, which I could only just hear, might give token of some inward feeling.

He was then subject, perhaps daily subject, to terrible bodily spasms, contortions of the countenance, which gave him the appearance of being in a devil of a temper! Little did the admiring world know how its favourite suffered—how he hid his throes. So frequent were his attacks, that his wife, it was pretty clear, regarded them as things of course.

In a frame of mind, judging by appearances, that strongly disposed him to break the looking-glasses, my master now took the room at two strides, seized a book, flung himself into a chair, and commenced a "calm course of reading," with knit brows and lips violently disposed to denticulate one another. But before he had thus settled himself, my mistress broke silence—yet scarcely so either—by a meek inquiry; it might be

relating either to supper or bed, but at all events it elicited no answer; and the favourite of society politely busied himself, or affected to do so, in his book.

Heaven help the author, for he had no gentle or courteous reader! After some rapid turnings of the page, and mere inarticulate criticisms, the volume was tossed away, and a yawn testified to its effects. This seemed a good sign; the paroxysm was nearly over; and thus encouraged, my mistress, who had ventured a word or two unavailingly before, followed up this invasion of the silence, by seeking to recall her lord's attention to their newly-furnished abode, timidly remarking as before.

"I think, sir, the portrait which hangs so high may—"

But there was not time to complete the suggestion; for the gay and gallant captain, speaking now to his adored wife for the first time since the departure of his guests, said,

"Damme, madam, you are always so monstrous full of complaints; now the picture, even as it hangs, has at least the merit of being silent."

With these words and a second yawn, together with a candle snatched from the nearest table, but without a syllable to announce his intention, my admired master took his departure for the night; yes, so it was, indeed —he returned no more.

Now, hearing what I had heard, and seeing what I had seen of my master before his visitors departed, had he, when left alone (that is, reckoning my mistress as nobody), proceeded to take his handsome features to pieces, one by one, as easily as he took off his wig; had he placed his eyes in one drawer, his teeth in a second, unscrewed one of his legs, and laid his severed head on the table, ready for Peggy to take up into his dressing-room; I could not have been more astonished, nor could

the alteration have been greater than the change between his countenance for company and his private one —his social and his domestic manner—in short, his artificial and his natural self.

But none of this astonishment marked the demeanour of my mistress, when of the score of merry musical good-nights which he had bestowed on his parting guests, not an echo was heard to survive for her—when, without word, look, or sign, he left her to follow him, as solitude or sleepiness might move her. To her it seemed but one of the regular and anticipated events of the evening.

As he quitted the room, her eyes followed him, momentarily, with a reproachful expression; then their look became merely sorrowful, until they slowly filled with tears, and with her face hidden in her hands, a suppressed sob was the only sound to tell that there was anything either to resent or to forgive.

She soon arose calm as usual; the sigh as she left the apartment for the sleeping-chamber was as low, being habitually hushed, as though hearers had been nigh, and in her quiet eye there was now not a trace of tears. It was a picture of Resignation.

The next day I was again on the look-out, and just as quick to listen; but the various considerate speculations I had entertained in order to account for the phenomenon witnessed the evening before—viz., that the captain and my mistress had quarrelled violently, that he was jealous of her and assumed a cruel manner in the hope that she might betray herself in resenting it; that she was naturally chilly and insensible, which provoked him to madness; that she was a termagant of an untameable sort, and that he was working out a desperate experiment; lastly, that he was a victim to some spasmodic affection, too acute for flesh and blood to

bear with a bland aspect and an amiable deportment—all these vanished as my experiences grew.

However fierce and dark the spell that bound him, the presence of a third person was sure to dissolve it; however sweet, however potent, the charm that influenced him in society, it perished at the approach of solitude or his wife.

Nothing went right with him that morning, nor any other during the months he resided under that roof. Everything was out of its place, and in his way; a conspiracy against his peace prevailed on all sides, and his wife, if he happened to think of her at all, was at the bottom of it. But the instant another face appeared upon the stage, then his became another too; the scowl cleared off, the sullen rigid lips relaxed into a smile, the sallow cheek even seemed to brighten, and a marriage-bell was not livelier than the pleasant chimes of his conversation.

"Ah!" said his sagacious admirers, as they shook hands with him after a chat that had put them in good spirits for the rest of the day, "Flint may well remain the favourite; one can never catch him out of tune; he 's always in one happy humour the whole year round—and yet with such a wet-blanket of a wife!"

So he still went on; reserving (to liken him to the substance that bears his name, and is supposed to be the raw material of some men's hearts) all his brilliant sparks for society, and all his sharp cutting corners for his home.

So, too, the deception was still kept up. Even Peggy, though looking daily, as it were, over his very shoulder, was deceived. However surly his visage, or snarling his tone, the instant before to his wife, when Peggy entered, smiles spread over the face, and sweetness stole into the voice; and worlds could not have persuaded

Peggy out of her first conviction, that Captain Flint was the kindest, the gentlest, and the most even-tempered of all mortal lodgers. Ah! foolish Peggy—had you but been where I was!

But Peggy after another twelvemonth or so was obliged to seek another idol; for the lodgers removed; the silent, self-controlling, passively-obedient wife to the churchyard, and the seductive captain to country quarters. For solitude in his old apartments had now become more trying to his temper, more disagreeable every way, and especially more productive of painful indications in the countenance, than of late had been to him the presence of his pale partner and unreproaching companion—the libelled and lawful victim of his double-faced and heartless vanity—the martyr to secret griefs and cruel scorns, who perished uncared for and unregretted, while her assassin went forth as usual to cheat and be cheated—to play his gay part in the hollow pageants of life, and bow to its mockeries as if he knew them to be real.

Lodgers in plentiful succession, single and married, took up their abode in the house, and occupied the same suite of apartments, after the widower quitted them; but of these at present I am not the historian.

I pass to a later period of my experiences—many years after, when a gentleman who had come to inspect the lodgings, was shown into this very apartment. He had already seen the others, and appeared indifferent about them, but that might be the result of manner, or the consequence of age; for some would have thought him too old to care much about the style of the room he was to live in now. Yet he was by no means unconcerned on this point, and gazed around him from wall to wall on every side with eyes of lively

interest. From floor to ceiling his mild searching glances ranged; and it was in soft sweet tones, and with a profound serenity of manner, as though his heart felt at rest, that he said,

"Yes, I will come and live here—come and die here."

There was on his calm aspect as he spoke a beautiful smile, which to his noble and venerable appearance added a charm singularly captivating. He agreed to enter upon possession at once, and the same night various articles of property were brought in and deposited in this apartment, which he carefully locked on retiring for the night.

In the morning, the key was applied to *me*, and the old man entered and stood alone in the room, surveying every object calmly and thoughtfully. His head drooped, yet this but rendered his air more dignified; and he seemed a man in whom all vain thoughts and violent passions were dead—in whom alone some sweet, and some, perchance, very bitter memories now survived.

He busied himself, as well as his little strength would permit, about the room, in arranging the articles brought in; and when he had placed them to his satisfaction, he sat apparently contemplating some object amongst them of particular interest; what it was I could not see. After some hours thus spent he retired, and again locked the door.

The next day he returned, and the next, and every day; and on the same spot he always sat, sometimes reading, sometimes in meditation, with eyes looking inwardly into himself, but most frequently with his gaze fixed on some object placed before him, with which he seemed to converse silently, securing invariably there a dear and tranquil companionship that rendered loneliness impossible.

A few weeks, months indeed, passed away, and my curiosity had never been gratified by a single word, not a syllable that might explain the old man's mysterious visits and sacred communings in this room, into which no foot save his own was permitted to enter; when I began to note that his thin pale hand trembled more as he applied the key, and his step grew more feeble as he walked to his chair, and I thought his look became still calmer, though fonder too as he gazed on the treasure (for such it must be) before him.

The feebleness visibly increased; the visits became briefer; and then they stopped. The old man returned not again, and a knell from a neighbouring spire told why.

Some weeks after his death, when a new occupant had taken the rooms, some articles of property were removed, and amongst them, as they were carried out, a picture became for an instant visible. I recognised it as one that had hung long since in that same apartment, and from the canvass still looked down those meek and patient eyes which had so often turned on the vanity and self-will of Captain Flint, lessons not learnt in time, but yet not finally lost.

PART II.

THE GOOD MAN AND HIS WIFE.

Amongst the earliest occupants of the apartment with which, as a keyhole, I am inseparably associated, was Robert Amber. The prefix "Mr." was commonly dispensed with in his case, even by his contemporaries. People spoke of Robert Amber as they may now speak of John Howard.

It was a reputation for integrity, for entire purity of

character, that had insensibly led all who knew him to make this distinction. They sought to express a profound reverence, by thus setting aside common ceremony. He appeared to them as the impersonation of a great principle, an embodied truth; and to have addressed him as "Mr." would have sounded, in some cases, almost as ridiculous as it would be for a glowing and imaginative orator to apostrophise Mrs. Justice or Miss Hope.

The character of the new tenant is thus indicated the moment he makes his appearance, lest it should be erroneously supposed that the non-observance of established formality, with respect to the appellative alluded to, was the result of an irreverent familiarity. No such mistake, at least, could be committed by any one who had beheld him. Robert Amber had scarcely reached middle life, but his presence was invested with a charm, which the most dignified old age, with all the sanctity and veneration that rightfully belong to it, often fails to awaken.

His figure was tall and thin, his head somewhat drooping, his brow lofty rather than broad, his cheeks pale, his lips inclining, even in perfect repose, to a smile. Heart-seated benevolence, and constitutional serenity of mind, were the qualities most conspicuous in his face. His eye was bright, but it was with the lustre whose mild steadiness promises no flash of fire; and the smiling mouth spoke as little of hearty merriment. A burst of jovial laughter would seem to be as inconsistent with its calm, pleasant, natural expression, as a cold blighting sneer, or a volley of curses. He had an air at all times of the most majestic simplicity; his manners were wonderfully sweet and impressive; he seemed at peace with himself and the whole world; and

he won confidence universally, by appearing unconscious that he had any quality that could command it.

Robert Amber was known to be a truly good man, charitable, candid, and sincere. He was a man, as the wise observers said, that could be seen through. If there were "dirt, or grubs, or worms" lurking in his composition, he at least affected no concealment of his little blots and blemishes. Whatever fault or foible disfigured him, the most cursory investigator could not help spying it out; and although he by no means intended his virtues to be equally visible to the naked eye of observation at all hours, such was the frank, spontaneous, open, transparent character of his nature, that the inquirer must be blind who failed to note them springing in perpetual freshness and luxuriant abundance.

His character I learned accidentally on the very day of his arrival. On his first entering the room, I was naturally curious to peep at the new comer, whom it was now my destiny to serve in a condition of convenience and utility bordering on the indispensable. As soon as I could fairly espy him, I was enchanted with the—shall I say?—intense respectability of his appearance, with his gentle benevolent aspect, with his modest but elevated air. Honesty, a plain-looking quality enough in others, looked in him sublime. Before the day was over, these my impressions were confirmed, by my overhearing a conversation on the subject of his merits, carried on by two visitors who had been shown into the apartment, and were waiting the return of the servant sent to announce their arrival to the good man. I stopped my breath, though the draught was very strong at the time, to listen.

"I know," said the chief speaker, one Lieutenant Fin, as I afterwards found out, a lively, honest son of

the sea, "I know the Amber family well. My grandfather and Robert's were shipmates—companions, that is, ashore; and my father and his sailed together too, though they never went to sea in their lives; and he and I in turn have been playfellows, schoolfellows, friends, in one form or another, ever since we were first launched. He was always, heart and mind, what he is now; true as the needle, smooth as the ocean in a calm, clearer and brighter than the deep blue water below, and warm as the summer-heaven above. Nobody ever thought ill of Robert Amber, and of course everybody speaks well of him."

"Rather suspicious that!" interposed the other voice; "for when everybody—"

"Suspicious!" cried the lieutenant, "what do you mean? Why, I tell you that Robert Amber—"

And hereupon, as if acting upon the principle of another well-known personage, who is never absent long when his name is mentioned, my new master made his appearance.

The meeting was cordial, happy, and affectionate; noisy and rapturous on the side of Fin; more calm, more collected and dignified, but not a drop less brimful of gladness and sympathy, on the part of his venerated friend. The lieutenant introduced his companion, and a welcome ensued such as words only could never convey. The intelligible bow, the outstretched hand, the mild earnest tones, would all have been inexpressive, without the look which carried to the stranger's mind a greeting from the very soul.

The object of the visit was soon stated by the voluble and eager lieutenant. The gentle willing Amber was called upon to listen; he was all readiness, all ear; and having with a smiling composure seated his visitors at their utmost ease, having made them feel (by

what silent but sure arts, active yet inexplicable, I shall not attempt to say) that they were never so much at home, and might go on talking both together, for three hours at the least, without risk of the discourtesy of interruption—my master dropped serenely into a chair, placed his elbows on the arms of it, and with upraised palms pressed together, his chin resting lightly on the tips of his fingers, sat prepared to hear anything.

An enemy of Robert Amber—if it were possible for such a man to have an enemy—might have suspected, from something in his attitude and manner, that he was at that instant of preparation thinking of himself, of his general air, of his hands, even of his dress—of the picture, in short, then presented—presented, they might have moreover fancied, for effect.

It is true the hands were wonderfully white and well-formed, so also were the ruffles; and it should be mentioned that a cultivation of the nicer and more dignified arts of dress was by no means what my master ever neglected. His powder was of the snowiest, his cambric of the finest, his lace of the rarest; no speck of dust, or small stain of any kind, was ever permitted to be seen on his rich silks; nor could the eye that admired the glitter of his diamond buckles ever detect one of them a hair's-breadth awry. His whole person was invariably in the most exquisite order; he appeared, every hour of the day, as though he had spent the entire day at his toilet; he never required even a minute's notice to be absolutely perfect; the accidents of life seemed to spare him always; he travelled on at the side of bespattering Time, without being disfigured by a splash; and the very winds forbore "to visit his face too roughly," or to deform a costume sanctified by the spirit of care and neatness.

The story was soon told. Fin's friend was a man of

enterprise and discovery, of projects and improvements. For ten years his ingenuity had been on the rack to combine a series of conflicting plans, and work out one great harmonious scheme, by which a generation unborn was to be benefited, and his own fortune made. Successful at length to the full extent of his wildest dreams, he now wanted nothing but a generation of men, willing to be convinced, and to advance funds. He had accomplished everything, except devising the proper means of doing something to begin. The Archimedean machine was finished, and now it was only necessary to move the world.

Advice was wanted; who so able to advise as Robert Amber? Assistance was necessary; who so able to assist as he? He had some wealth, much influence of position, and a weight of character sufficient to ballast and steady any scheme, however airy. Then he had extreme prudence, experienced judgment, and great knowledge of the world.

Thus endowed, who so willing to listen? Robert Amber heard the tale silently, reflectingly, and at length approvingly. He fell into no raptures, but he was in every line of his face satisfied that the scheme was a sound one, and demanded immediate trial. He at first closed his eyes for the space of a minute and a half; he next raised them to the ceiling, and afterwards dropped them slowly towards the fire, which they seemed to search curiously for some seconds; then travelling glancingly, but with a grave thoughtful expression, over the faces of his two visiters, they fell upon some writing materials near him. Of these he now made use, entering into divers calculations, repeating them in other forms, taking notes of objection, and marking them off as the light broke through the seemingly tangled forest of figures. In the end, he

was quite convinced, quite; and with simple earnestness, but without enthusiasm, promised his instant aid.

"I'm afraid," said he, with a little flush on his pale face, caused by the triumphant calculations just completed, "I'm afraid that there is a sufficient attraction of self-interest in this scheme to draw me at once into its support; but, dear old associate," he continued, addressing the happy and admiring Fin exclusively, "you are right in feeling that it would have been an insult to friendship to have hesitated about claiming my assistance, on your own and your friend's account alone. For what do we live, I should like to know? I might have forgiven, however, the offence to friendship; I could even have pardoned the imputation on my patriotism and public spirit—this project will be a great thing for the country; perhaps I should not have been very angry at being by implication accused of stinginess; but you know, the declining to consult me, might have involved a suspicion that I was poor—and who could forgive *that?*"

When gravity condescends to be gay, the effect is generally prodigious, and this was said with such an innocent, light-hearted playfulness, that it wonderfully set off the sober wisdom of the utterer. It had indeed all the effect of a brilliant joke, while it denoted amiability of character; and it was just as the spirit of satisfaction thus pervaded the little conference, that Mrs. Amber, whose hand had been on the lock some seconds before she turned it (her head too happened to be rather bowed towards *me*), opened the door, and greeted the company.

This lady's portraiture, if executed in reference to herself only, would require the nicest care, skill, and art; the most intricate lines, and a difficult blending of colours, fleeting lights and shadows that baffle the

nimble eye; but touched in reference to her husband, nothing can be so easy. It was indeed a softened copy of his own. Mrs. Amber was a finished engraving from the original picture of Mr. Amber: or, what he thought and did in oil, she might be said to think and do in water-colours.

The world has heard of some great man whose wife attended on his steps like a note of admiration at the end of a sentence; but Mrs. Amber was an exact repetition of that nicely-balanced sentence, her husband, in smaller print. She was formed of the clay that remained after he was made. Had their heads been of wood, hers would have been a chip of the same block that supplied his; and if their hearts had been of stone, hers must have been dug out of the identical quarry in which his had hardened; moreover, if the husband's had chanced to harden round a toad that lived comfortably imbedded in it, the wife's would infallibly have had its little imitative freakish frog squatting in the centre.

It is said of numberless hypocritical couples who take care never to quarrel in company, that they were "formed for each other;" and a secret sympathy between the pair in question had such a mysterious influence, that their persons grew alike, and they seemed by destiny fitted for the relationship in which they stood. If the one had an accession of fat, so had the other; if the husband fell away, so did the wife. Their four eyes, if shaken in a bag, must necessarily have come out pairs; their voices were the same, the difference being merely in compass; what A. said, Mrs. A. seconded, true as the echo; their thoughts were alike all day long, and their dreams were generally found to match, when compared over the breakfast table.

It follows therefore, as a matter of course, that Mrs.

Amber met the friends with a dignified sweetness; it follows, too, that as her husband invited his visitors to stop and dine, she repeated the invitation in a manner not less winning and impressive—so they staid.

The hours flew in delightful intercourse—joyous and high-spirited on the part of the two guests—sensible, well-bred, and with an air of elevated enjoyment, on the part of their entertainers: over whom there fell hour by hour a happier, dearer charm, the charm of dispensing hospitality. My master nobly sustained the gentle but dignified character of Robert Amber, the friend and philanthropist; the practical illustrator of all that is purest in humanity; the teacher, by expressive deeds, of the philosophy "peace and goodwill to man." Everything that fell from his lips was a thing pleasant to hear, and as Mrs. Amber never failed to repeat it, the pleasure was doubled. . . . .

At parting, when the guests retired to keep their evening engagements, my kind master renewed to both, in his most impressive and deliberate manner, the assurances of the morning. His words were not many, but they had weight; they seemed heavy with the massive gold of sincerity, and sunk accordingly into the souls of his hearers. There was no tinsel compliment to make his speeches showy, but you could hear the ring of the metal.

"Of success we are almost sure. Rely upon me. I shall support the plan, not only with my advice, but my fortune. I would not have you go to the house of Pratt or Lloyd—nor yet to Ranger's—you will find them costly; great houses must be. Nor should you trouble your friends in the north; their present business, prosperous as it is, might be affected by the risk. Rely upon me. I'll write a letter or two on the subject by this night's post—this night's. Adieu!

Remember, I am to aid you, not only with my advice and influence, but my fortune!"

"That I am sure you will," repeated Mrs. Amber, with a slightly weakened, yet still charming emphasis, "with your influence and fortune!"

"The Ambers are people," said the gay and jovial lieutenant, as the pair descended the stairs, "who are without guile, without concealment. What they mean they say. They have the milk of the cocoa-nut within, but without the rough shell. They are all nut."

The door closed, and Mrs. Amber was now alone with her husband. Robert Amber, in other words, was shut in with his "double." They were curiously like. Each turned upon the other the same look, a look that was equally inquiring and communicative. It telegraphed each other's sentiments; but to open conversation, as they drew their chairs to the fire, he asked her what she thought; a question which she naturally echoed by asking him what was his opinion. Hereupon Robert Amber began immediately to reveal his real inward self. The angel took off his sham wings, and laid aside his false ambrosial locks; the divinity in his aspect at the same moment disappeared, and mortality of a most debased stamp took its place.

Strange to say, this philosopher reversed the common rule of domestic morality, and spoke with honesty and sincerity only to his wife. She alone was sure of the truth from him.

"No impossible scheme, my dear, these fellows have started. London may be lit with gas some odd night or other, far off from our time; but nevertheless, if it come at all, it will arrive without *my* hastening it on."

"So of course I should apprehend," remarked Mrs. Amber, performing the second part in this duet of confession.

"Yes; but still there may be something in it; and therefore, though disinclined to incur the risk of being entrapped, I shall not let them carry the project into another market."

"That, my love, your own instinct would guard you against," replied the amiable echo; "and consequently you will write by to night's post—"

"Yes; but perhaps not in my own name—"

"Not, I think, in your own name, my dear—"

"Both to Ranger, and to Pratt and Lloyd, just to stop the thing in those quarters: and you know, my love, in a more northern direction, a prudent private representation, such as I can make with perfect safety—"

"Oh, with perfect safety, to be sure, and justice to yourself; for in case, as you think possible, there should be something in the scheme, why should you suffer others to profit by what you decline!"

"I certainly should not like *that*," returned the philanthropist, glancing at the inkstand; "and therefore since you agree in opinion—"

"Here's writing-paper," said Mrs. Amber; "let me snuff the candles for you!"

* * * * *

"Letter from the Digbys," said the philanthropist, as Mrs. Amber appeared at breakfast the next morning, "asking us again into Staffordshire. Charming place—"

"Very," agreed Mrs. Amber.

"Of the kind," said her husband, finishing his commendation.

"True," assented the lady, "I was going to add, of the kind."

"Queer people, however, those Digbys," was the next remark, uttered with a perceptible curl of the thin lip.

"The queerest, oddest people—"

"Yes, with their homely country habits, mixed up with town refinements, and associations of the most polished and educated life; great wealth, used as a means of making mobs of little people comfortable, and good humour in the midst of the open rampant ridicule their folly raises. They worry and perplex me; one can't quietly laugh at their expense, when they're laughing themselves."

"Ah," cried Mrs. Amber, with a responsive look, "you describe my own mortified feelings there—"

"But it is not this that constitutes their chief oddity in my eyes. Do you know, my dear," and the philanthropist set down his cup of coffee, uncrossed his long legs, placed his hands upon his knees, with the elbows bent outward, and slowly inclining forward until his face approached its feminine counterpart, whilst his wife, in the act of pouring, sat with the cream-jug suspended over her cup, "do you know that I have long entertained a strong suspicion—"

"As I'm sure *I* always have," interposed the wondering Mrs. Amber.

"A strong suspicion, mind, that those Digbys are perfectly sincere! Strange, very strange, as that sounds, the idea is now an old one, and it has taken deep root in my mind."

"Every man has his weakness," suggested his lady, explainingly.

"Yes, and this may be mine—a suspicion that those people are sincere. I can't tell how so singular a thought first found its way into my head, but it can't now find its way out again. I incline to believe that they are really glad to see one; that they are absolutely honest in their professions of regard; and actually put faith in friendship: giving a welcome, not for their own sakes, but for ours, and finding pleasure in seeing others pleased."

"Wonderful!" ejaculated Mrs. Amber, setting down the cream; "and yet positively, my dear, a similar prejudice—"

"Ah, call it a prejudice; that's right; it is one; a gross delusion, perhaps; a crazy conceit; but it is not easily uprooted; and, after all, where is there a bound to human folly? The people *may* be no actors, but unaccountably, ridiculously in earnest."

Mrs. Amber continued to agree in the conclusion that this was very possible, and also that the notion of the existence of sincerity might be delusive, until breakfast was long over, and morning company had arrived; Mrs. Brisk and her daughters, the liveliest in the land.

They were the very ladies whom Mrs. Amber, echoing her excellent husband's asseveration, most longed to see. They were welcomed with every mark of kind and respectful attention; and no assurance of grateful and sympathising joy, uttered by my master, as he surveyed the bright looks and improved figures of the little party whom he condescended to chat with, lacked confirmation from the lips of his wife.

The heart of my master overflowed in such affecting declarations of love and good-will to humanity, that good Mrs. Brisk was the more readily encouraged to enter upon a confession of the more immediate motive of her call. Their poor old friend, the simple, modest clergyman of their parish, when the families happened to be neighbours in the country, years ago; well, he was now past service, and in want. A little provision for his old age had been proposed: Mrs. Brisk had presumed to bestir herself in the affair; she had ventured to appeal to old remembrances, and to be shamefully intrusive in many quarters—wherever a spark of hope glimmered; she craved of all things, for her now promising list, the advantage and sanction of Robert

Amber's influential name; and his petitioner would ever pray.

The philanthropist's face was all this time a beautiful study, a mirror reflecting whatever confers grace and nobility upon human nature; the image of emotions fine and deep as the life-springs of the blood, and of thoughts worthy in their loftiness and beauty of an immortal being.

"Ah! madam," he at length said, "what a melancholy joy you bring me. I wish it were in my power to terminate at this instant your beneficent and holy mission without depriving you of the happiness you feel in doing good. But it is little I can do, that I confess. It behoves us, wretched and humble as our means may be, to have no false shame, no concealment in these or in any matters. All that I can immediately bestow with my own poor hand is fifty pounds. What more I may be the means of doing—let me be silent respecting that!"

And having checked the lively and impetuous flow of thanks that followed the announcement of his bounty, having drawn many glad and grateful tears from the reverential eyes of his audience, he renewed his hint about "something more," pressed their hands each in turn, while Mrs. Amber sympathisingly echoed his "promissory note" by way of indorsing it, and then the door closed on the benevolent Brisks.

As soon as that ceremony which secured privacy was performed, my master walked towards the mirror, and surveyed his own countenance therein. It had as yet undergone no change of expression, and he seemed perfectly satisfied with it. At the same moment Mrs. Amber's complacent glances fell on the opposite mirror with a like effect. She was the first to speak.

"Troublesome and impudent, I think, my dear."

"Very impudent and troublesome, no doubt," returned the philanthropist, "but useful. These applications are of service when one can comply without cost. If one can contrive to subscribe the name only —by the way, what will these busy Brisks do with all the money they collect?—for some people pay, you know. Perhaps the poor parson may really get a little of it, by way of a blind; the deception must be kept up until the drain of benevolence is at an end!"

"True, my dear, and it is not unlikely, taking that view of things, that the Brisks may permit some little driblets. But the fifty pounds entered in your name?" she inquired—"I confess—"

"So do I," was the ready answer. "I confess to some faint recollection of a story, in which the pious *protégé* of the Brisks was unfortunate enough to figure years ago—a story about a girl—whether he saved her from destruction, or was the cause of her broken heart, is not at present quite clear; but I must give the right turn to the affair, you perceive—"

"Clearly," cried Mrs. Amber, upon whose mind, for once in deep shadow compared with her luminous husband's, the light began to break.

"The right turn to it," he continued; "lament the occurrence, feel duly shocked at the discovery, and withdraw my name, in dread of setting a dangerous example. Vice must weigh heavily enough against gray hairs, without throwing fifty pounds into the scale. Explanation, however, may be mercifully avoided; our friends the Brisks will desire no particulars that may check the subscription. Those girls, mark me, will have a set of diamonds each in the spring!"

* * * * *

Robert Amber, my illustrious master, pursued thus

day by day his triumphant course of profound dissimulation. As he excelled most men, or all, in the art of assuming the virtues he had not, so there is reason to hope that he must likewise have exceeded them in his total disbelief of the existence of the virtues assumed. And yet it so happened that no stronger proof of such existence could well have been given, than the hourly evidence of reverence for virtue, afforded by the homage offered up to his simulated purity. Those who knew not how to emulate his apparent merit could still add something to their own stock, by recognising its reality, and reposing an honest faith in the excellence to which they vainly aspired. Thus, in the very depths of his own hypocrisy, had his intellect been as unclouded for good as for evil, he might have discovered the most convincing arguments against the doctrine of disbelief in sincerity; for the perfection of his own acting made others cease to be actors; and through his own admirable mask he might have seen hundreds of true faces glowing with a generous confidence that there was no mask at all, that humanity might still climb upward to the point of earth "nearest the stars," and thence look undespairingly to heaven.

But Robert Amber drew no such lessons from his successful practice. He had faith in no man's sincerity; and would as soon have believed himself, and have thus become a dupe to his own art, as have given credence to another. If he heard of an act of kindness, freely done in the spirit of kindness, though at no cost at all, his reflection was, "Now what can be the meaning of that?"

But when he saw a generous deed performed, succour rendered to the sinking stranger, sacrifices made to assist struggling merit, the human hand grasped in the

human hand to assure and to sustain by a common sympathy, the only effect upon his mind was an uncomfortable suspicion.

"What is this man's motive? Some deep design, for it looks so disinterested!"

He looked upon acts of charity, either as timid and superstitious compoundings for enormous private vices, or as small sums cunningly laid out to attract value received in meat or malt a hundred times over. He regarded all aid given to dawning talent as an investment for the purchase of toadyism, or capital sunk to establish a partnership in future profits.

To profess the slightest regard for the public weal, to talk of patriotism as more than a convenient word in any man's vocabulary, he held to be a most outrageous pretence; and to suppose there might be honesty in the tempted, fidelity to the very last in servants, he thought a silly delusion. Servants, indeed, he invariably suspected of every vice conceivable; and would have admired the sensitive and never-fading virtue of Lady Blarney, who dismissed her companion, "suspecting an intrigue with the chaplain."

Distinction paid to talent when successful, he interpreted as a taste for good dinners, and the propensities of the sycophant. In short, to protect the humble was hypocrisy; to help the humble and clever was policy more or less wise; to admire the clever and powerful was tact—admirable tact. In all cases, the last thing to be recognised, when considering the motives for an act, was the motive assigned; and as the direct path was thus abandoned by a standing agreement, it followed that there was often extreme perplexity in finding out, amongst the many, the most indirect road.

Unfortunately, too, the good deeds were continually

coming to light (for they will, as fast as evil ones), as if on purpose to perplex him.

"I have been considering, my dear, what that Miss Magglesworth can be at. She has, I find, taken her late sister's little boy to educate and provide for, and she has but a hundred a year of her own."

"Sly," remarked Mrs. Amber, looking out at the most cunning corner of her eye; "of course to secure the father's visits. She was always fond of him, and I believe the poor wife, though she was a woman I never liked—"

"A bad set, no doubt, my dear. And so the Ribblestones have started on a tour! on a tour at this time of the year; taking, mind, their second daughter, Lucy, with them. I suspect there's something in that. You remember that match was broken off not more than a month ago."

"About a month," assented Mrs. Amber; "well, perhaps she is best away just now, and you know she'll be brought back again."

"Very true; and, by the by, what is the address of that old nurse who called when—ah, here it is. Well, we've seen nothing of Charlotte Bragg and her brothers. That young lady, my dear, should never have refused the hand of young Clutchmore, beggar as he then was; but of course she could not foresee that he would have come into quiet possession of all his father's property, after he had been notoriously cut off with a shilling."

"And what settlements," cried the lady, "he would have made! Why he has been lavishing the most extravagant gifts—ten thousand to each of his sisters—two to the niece—five hundred to the old steward—"

"Hush-money, my dear; depend upon it that will is forged."

"Forged! of course," repeated the sympathetic echo.

* * * * *

It was one morning, after some such conversation had been carried on for an hour, and when the popular philanthropist and his domestic double were shortly to leave London on a visit to one of the families they had been vilifying, that a visitor announced himself by a friendly tap at the door, which was followed by his immediate entrance. He had often dropped in before, quite as unceremoniously, and now advanced hastily, and shook hands.

"Sit down," said my master.

"Dear Mr. Hicks, pray sit down," said my mistress.

"Haven't time, in good faith," exclaimed he; "heard you were just on the start, and called to give you a trifling commission. You are going to Parsnips-hall; you will find on your arrival there, among scores of strangers, somebody you know a little; I have a slight knowledge of him myself—the gentleman, I mean, to whom this letter is addressed. Will you deliver it? It is rather of consequence, and I would prefer intrusting it to a safe hand. Thanks—and farewell. No ceremony, my dear sir. Mrs. Amber, your most obedient."

Mr. Hicks was gone, and his letter was left lying upon the table. My master's eye rested on it for a minute with a calm expression, and then wandered to the face of his fair partner. Hers met it at the turn, and the looks of both gathered keenness from the encounter, and slowly sharpened into earnest curiosity. My master took up the letter, read the address, and laid it down again.

"My dear," said he, musingly, "what on earth can Mr. Hicks be writing to *him* about? They are barely acquainted."

"Robert Amber," returned his wife, emphatically,

"*that* is about one of the last things, do you know, that I should have expected to happen;" and she also took up the letter, read the direction, and handed it to her husband, who having turned it over and inspected the seal, laid it again upon the table.

"Strange that he should charge me with the delivery of it; I know little of the man. I wonder—" and here he again took up the epistle, turned it about, and accidentally bent it a little.

"I wonder—" he repeated; but he said no more, and Mrs. Amber simply remarked that *she* did too.

Another look of now heated and intense curiosity was directed to the epistle. Robert Amber resumed possession of it, and, after a pause, raising its open sides to his eye, peeped in for an instant; he then glanced composedly round the apartment, looked meaningly at his silent companion, and peeped again, more inquisitively, more piercingly than before.

"Only a word or two visible," he coolly remarked, as he tossed the letter upon the table; "such phrases may mean nothing—"

"Nothing," echoed his wife, looking into the letter in turn, "or much."

"Perfectly right, my dear; or much, as you say. I certainly should like to know what it is they can have to correspond about! And *I'm* to deliver the letter, too!"

Saying which, he took the epistle held out to him, examined once more the handwriting and the seal, twisted it in his hand until its original shape was no longer recognisable, and at last the seal broke between his fingers. Robert Amber, with all his native dignity of deportment, and a more than natural curiosity lightening up his features, was just in the act of perusing the missive that had been intrusted to his care, sealed,

ten minutes before, when the door was opened without even the ceremony of a tap, and the writer of the letter stood before him. Robert Amber, in shivering limb and convulsed feature, appeared to have been that instant struck by lightning.

Insults the most scornful and stinging were then and there launched at him, sharp as the lightning shock indeed. They were repeated with still bitterer and more withering effect elsewhere the next day; and to hide his head, or show his sword, constituted his sole alternative. He challenged his insulter.

"This meeting, my dear," he remarked with a confident air to his wife, as he made his arrangements for the next morning, "is perfectly out of the question. It will never take place; not the meeting of weapons, I mean. But I own his acceptance of the challenge puzzles me. What can he mean by that? He has not the slightest skill, none; and has secretly the good sense and discretion to be an arrant coward. Hostilities, you see, are quite impossible!"

"Oh, quite!" replied the amiable echo, without the least tremulousness that could indicate anxiety.

* * * * *

The world saw very plainly at last into the character of the philanthropist, Robert Amber, the illustrator in all his deeds and words of peace and good-will to man, of charity to the human race. In fact, people really saw quite through him; and this thorough inspection was contemporaneous with two large holes which had just been drilled through the region where his heart had lately been supposed to throb. His death was fairly attributable to a flaw in his doctrine. His firm faith was, that there was no such thing as courage or honour in mortal man; nothing but hypocrisy. He had relied for safety upon the treacherous practices which he

believed to be coextensive with the practices of life. He had contended, but unhappily with a sword in his hand, for the universality of imposture; and he was brought home dead beat in the argument.

PART III.

PEOPLE WHEN AT HOME.

A PRIVATE VIEW.

Not poets only, but persons who ought to know better, are apt to discourse fluently upon the sanctities of home. Home's home, says the wise proverb, abstaining from going beyond a bare fact. Home's sacred, says the dealer in false dogmas, caring nothing about fact.

"Approach," cries the sentimentalist, "but approach slowly and with reverence. This is hallowed ground. Home is at hand. Pause ere you presumptuously cross the threshold, or look lightly in at the open door. A man's house is his castle. Sanctity dwells there. Direct not a flying glance at the window; let not even one heedless, wandering look find its way in at the half-closed blinds. As for the keyhole—take care, or your ear may come accidentally in contact with it; for Heaven's sake take care, or your eye may be drawn by the strong current of air to the aperture, and with one compulsory peep you may violate all the sanctities! Home is sacred."

But why are the sentimentalist's fellow-mortals to enter these precincts thus cautiously and reverentially? Why dread to intrude? Why step as if upon holy ground? Why shrink from knocking uninvited? Why not enter without ceremony? A man's home is the place where a man is most himself; home, then, is the

very place of all others where we should rush in at all hours to see him, sure of never taking him at a disadvantage.

When somebody is seen to make himself vastly comfortable, and to indulge at ease in the enjoyment of his own natural manner, he is said, though wandering all the time a thousand miles from his hearthstone, to be quite at home.

Human nature, at home, then, is a true thing—a veritably honest existence. It is not a semblance of the man, but the man. He has scraped off his hypocrisy with the dirt from his shoes at the street-door, ere he entered; he has left his mask, comic or tragic, with his hat on the appointed peg, not wanting either by the fireside where he unfolds himself; and he has thrown off the garb of outward manner which he has perhaps all day worn, as effectually as he has relieved himself of his travelling incumbrances. He has now no more power to act a part than he would have in sleep. His face is his natural face, his manner is his own personal property, and his speech is not a kind of ventriloquism, but describes his real feelings in tones unaffected.

Is this a state of things that should make delicate people blush at the bare idea of their own intrusiveness? This the temple, the precincts whereof they should enter with reverential awe lest they should start a secret unawares? into whose privacies they religiously shrink from penetrating, in the conviction that listening is flat burglary, and peeping, privately stealing in a dwelling-house. Why surely, to a man whose true nature, so often voluntarily and involuntarily concealed from the gaze of his brethren in clay, may thus be beheld as distinctly as he can ever behold his own image in a mirror, an eaves-dropper must be a blessing, a pair of prying eyes a godsend.

The case is altogether different when the same person, who is so naturally and entirely himself amidst the privacies of home, happens to be encountered on the highways or byways of the world; the thronged marts of blessing-bearing commerce, the busy restless haunts of idleness, or the giddy mazes of pleasure. There he might be considered privileged; and there it might be a point of true delicacy, seeing that he wears a mask and walks in disguise, to assume that he has no desire to be recognised, and to pass him by accordingly.

The sacredness associated with "home" is, in plain English (one of the dead languages), a convenient cloak for playing pranks in, securely and unobserved. When people find it a relief to leave off acting for a few hours, they fly to the domesticities. At home they are behind the scenes, out of view, and at liberty to be themselves again. As at the touch of a wand, off goes the finery; the finished gentleman growls, grimaces, kicks the cat, and curses the servant, with an exquisite relish of ease and freedom; the tragedy-queen tosses off her pot of porter in comfort; the sage grave man is a giddy vagabond; the dashing spendthrift a sudden convert to penuriousness; the arbiter of all fashion, a seedy scarecrow; the advocate of temperance asks for a corkscrew; the saint swears he is as tired as the devil; and the charming young lady sits down to sulk, and think spiteful things of that Miss Grigs, who was asked to dance eleven times to her nine.

The sacredness of home! Why it often exhibits spectacles and echoes sounds the most opposite to sanctity. No sprite ever lurked in keyhole with eye or ear half open, without soon learning secrets well worth knowing, even in the "best regulated families." To see some people there, to get the happy peep when not so much as a fly is supposed to be looking at them, is to

observe them by an agency wonderful as the microscope. If we could see their tears, we should see also prodigious crocodiles and other ugly things crawling and swimming in the bright drops. What swarms of horrid secrets would necessarily be disclosed, if that microscopic medium of inspection were available to the universal eye, and everybody could see and hear of others what at present they know only of themselves! What need of Momus's famous pane in the breast, the heart's window!

Friend Homo, in fact, seems to have been originally born "a twin." Every human being is his own double —with this distinction, that his double is his opposite and not his counterpart. He has a public self and a private self; individually, he is Dick; socially, he is Harry; in-doors he is clay-coloured, out of doors perhaps sky-blue; alone he is but a grub, but abroad he is a full-fledged fly. His smeared morning-gown and his evening dress-coat are not more unlike. He goes out Pegasus, and comes home Rosinante. You thought him porcelain, and now he is delf. If he seem as champagne to the multitude, probably he is water-gruel at the fireside; or if the difference be less great, even if the change be in his favour, still he seems not formed exactly of the same materials in society and in solitude; and is in verity no more the same person, than the flesh he carries about him is the same flesh he wore when a boy, which has all oozed away, every particle, and made room for a fresh accumulation of mysteriously commingling atoms, which are ever flying off, and giving place to a series of vanishing successors in turn.

No inhabitant of the many-tenanted apartment I belong to, was ever seen under circumstances of more striking contrast than the fair, the beautiful, the deli-

cate Mrs. Swansdowne. What a light broke into the room when she first entered it, flushing all things, ceiling, walls, and floor, with magic loveliness, and kindling in every crevice and corner a golden lustre. Her presence almost dispensed visible rays; such whiteness and rosiness were mingled in her beauty, such a harmony was seen and felt in all her gestures, looks, and movements.

But Mrs. Swansdowne was by no means the handsomest woman in the world. Beauty of a far higher, far more perfect character than hers, has been often seen; and, blessings on the pleasure-giving stock whence it comes! will often be seen again. Her face might have been more exquisitely formed, her features might have been more regular; her figure was not faultless, and to a completer symmetry might possibly have been added a fuller and finer grace of air or carriage. But however all this might be, there she was, in her collected charms, which it was base clownishness and insensibility to criticise, a living rival to the statue that enchants the world; there she stood, walked, or sat, scattering delights by infinite careless graces of expressive attitude, and looking, at every turn of the varied picture, more enchanting perhaps than even a prouder and more perfect beauty would do.

This probably was in some degree the effect of that nameless but essential charm, which softens, refines, and elevates every other in woman; that charm which can have no existence but in the habitual exercise of a taste the most pure, and a pervading delicacy peculiar to the feminine mind. This was seen in her air, it governed every motion, it was heard in the very tones of her voice, and it was discernible in all the arrangements of her dress.

In her dress, especially, was Mrs. Swansdowne "a

real blessing to mothers," by showing them how their daughters should be arrayed, and how they themselves might find adornment without resorting to an unseemly mimicry of youth. Young herself, though the object of admiring affection shining through the eyes of her pretty girls, she was the mirror in which they might look for grace, propriety, and becomingness, all represented in her person, the model by which they might acquire the true art and style of ornament.

In this ornament, however, there was no "foreign aid;" in other words, no dash, no splendour, no excess; even the loveliness of Mrs. Swansdowne would have been crushed under the weight of lavish decoration; it was too tender to admit of being surrounded with glitter and rich colours. The essence, the spirit of it was simplicity; that destroyed or hidden, it would have ceased to exist; and upon this principle, therefore, her dress was arranged in its minutest particulars. The nicest art was invisibly present; taste and elegance had left nothing further to be accomplished. After all, if the term neatness may be understood to comprise enough of embellishment, it might be said that Neatness was the favourite attendant-nymph at her toilet.

Happily for the father, the girls promised to be amazingly like their mother; and happily for the mother, the father was mighty proud of them all. Mr. Swansdowne was perhaps something of a goose; but he had brains enough to know where his heart lay. He was passionately fond of his wife, but it would have been quite superfluous for him to tell her so; for his eyes, as they obeyed the law of fascination, and followed her about, left his tongue no eloquence. To him

> She was a form of life and light,
> That seen became a part of sight.

She was evidently all in all to him; the heart of his

enjoyment, the soul of all his earthly interest; and rapturous idolatry, the loving and generous capacity of thus living devotedly and solely for another, finding a new and sweeter existence in the mere sense of her perfections, invested a character, otherwise commonplace enough, with something of dignity.

Love made poor Swansdowne a noble fellow; as the great enlightening, humanising, purifying, beneficent passion has made noble, millions and millions of natures, that else had grovelled in the dust and mire of the slavish sensual world. Something of Cymon is in all men, and Iphigenias are not scarce. The transforming power rarely, if ever, fails. Where one creature has been debased, thousands have been exalted by love; where one has been crushed and trampled by his violence, thousands, countless thousands, have been raised, refined, enraptured, and redeemed.

A happy family were the Swansdownes, on the day of their arrival, and each of them in turn, girls and mother, might have sat to Sir Joshua for her picture. Each was apparently in high fashion; choicely apparelled; arrayed as for the reception of company, with the nicest taste and care; and yet dress was so worn by each as if it were impossible she could ever dress otherwise. They all seemed to be so attired, not that they might look well in strange or even in friendly eyes, but simply that they might be pleasing in the sight of one another.

Assembled at breakfast the next morning, these rainbow-tints had totally fled the group composing the family picture. They had arrived the day before at their new abode, with the feeling of visitors, and they had besides paraded gaily in the sunshine of Pall-mall. Now they were *at home*. A more unsightly set of drabs never yet took tea for breakfast. I could hardly at

first put faith in my spying faculty, so singular and deceptive was the transformation.

The queen-sloven possessed hopeful subjects, but these young things were far from coming up to the elaborate disorder of the elder style. Mrs. Swansdowne, indeed, was superb and unapproachable in her display of the negligences. She was a paragon of *déshabille*, a pattern for the contemners of appearances, a high priestess in the temple of no-fashion, a mirror and a model for the whole tribe of slatterns. She might have been ever crying with the forlorn, bewildered Beatrice,

> How comes this hair undone?
> Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
> And yet I tied it fast!

Yes, such was the character assumed by Mrs. Swansdowne on her second appearance. Had she stood before me twelve feet high the wonder would have been less—less than the transformation that had taken place. She, alas, who had been attired "as ladies wish to be," although wishes may sometimes fail of success; who seemed inspired by an unerring taste, and had made millinery look sublime; to whom elegance appeared natural, and neatness (eclipsing even magnificence) indispensable: she was now in the last stage of unmitigated, undisguisable slovenliness.

Yet, cup in hand, she smiled complacently, and seemed conscious of no unseemliness. Her attire, for aught that appeared, was as tasteful and becoming in her eyes as the garb she had last worn—brilliant as a court-dress. Her hair betraying traces of disorder, "her zone unbound," her slippered feet, and dingy drapery huddled on as if by accident, or in the dark, presented a picture only to be adequately seen by the light which contrast throws upon it. The genius for

adornment showed off admirably the vast talent for disfigurement possessed by the female head of the Swansdownès.

And *what* slippers! what a morning wrapper! what soiled white, what faded yellow, what dreary pink! Spirit of mortal beauty, how may mortal ugliness enshroud you!

Ye powers of propriety, that govern times and seasons, and regulate the eternal fitness of things, what has a crumpled nightcap to do with the broad, bright sunshine!

If a mermaid had been destined to be so be-decked, the green one must have blushed red at the first peep into the glass. Had Venus risen from the sea's watery bed in such a costume, she must have instantly sought a watery grave in despair, and under coroner Neptune's direction, a verdict of "found drowned" would have been recorded.

There sat the tasteful, "stylish" Mrs. Swansdowne, and so sat she, morning after morning, by the side of girls almost equally adapted, by an ingenious unsightliness of costume, to frighten crows out of their wits.

And where sat poor S. all the time? Oh, in the "bosom of his family." There he also sat, morning after morning, in the midst; himself smart and spruce, "neat, trimly dressed, and his beard new-reaped;" a plant of promise among luxuriant weeds; a bit of modern stucco-work amidst splendid dilapidations, making disorder more disorderly by his primness.

One who was himself *point devise*, could not but note the disregard to appearances around him; but, whatever he thought, he said nothing; his eyes made no silent complaint to his partner, nor did they give sign, by the slightest diminution of their fond admiration, of a consciousness that his out-door divinity was a dowdy

in-doors, and that his fine bird, after all, required fine feathers. His thoughts seemed fixed on the pearl in his oyster, and he was blind to the dirty, rough outside of the shell.

But it may be supposed that, bad as the slatternly habit was, it disappeared at least with the breakfast. This, however, entirely depended on the arrangements for the day. If visitors were to be seen, or if visits were to be paid, Mrs. Swansdowne was quite another woman, and her girls were not the same girls. The cares of the toilet then became the first of duties; the very prettiest articles of dress and decoration were brought out, the nicest taste was evinced in the choice of colours, everything becoming came readily to the lady's hand, and she was as a golden pheasant in its feathers, compared with the same thing out of them. She had the happy art, while complying with the caprices of fashion, so as never to look singular, to shape and modify them to her own style, so that what to many were disguises, were embellishments to her; and all this she did so easily, and as though by instinct, that it was the more surprising she should ever take the trouble to be a sloven.

Such was the domestic practice for weeks and months. Mrs. Swansdowne was never neat, never near the point of visibility, in the morning; and unless somebody was expected, she hardly got nearer to it at night.

"It's hardly worth while to dress, girls," she would say, "nobody will see us but *your father*. My dear Joseph," she would add, on his arrival, "I am in the most odious and frightful disorder, as you perceive. Now, did you ever see such a dress! look at my hair; here's a shoe; positively I must go and look for a pin, for this bodice has hardly any fastening at all; but you know, my dear, I was aware we should be alone, and

one ought not to mind being an abominable fright *to you.* If anybody had been coming in with you indeed —but, as the dear girls said, 'it 's *only* papa.'"

By slow degrees the inebriating fumes of early love cleared away from the brain of Swansdowne, and he began to see a flaw in this reasoning. Nothing yet did. he say, but sometimes his eyes would wander over the careless, "untidy" person of his wife, with a consciousness that the domestic angel may be effectually hidden in a loose gown and dabbled ribbons. There was certainly less of rapture and admiration in his looks on these occasions; nor was the old feeling brought back by his glance falling on the girls.

At length he found that this domestic doctrine relative to appearance, was a false doctrine. He plainly saw, what had been visible all along, that the beauty of his home was a delusion, and that to possess a treasure which is never used, is to be practically without it. Others had greater pleasure in it than he had. *They* could perceive the grace and loveliness of his wife; *he,* save at intervals, had to dwell upon the reverse of the picture. To them she was an enchantress; to him, a breaker of sweet spells; gorgeous tapestry to them—to him, rags.

The daily compliment now lost its effect—"With you, what does it signify how one looks!" "I thought this dress would do, as we should be by ourselves!" No, these expressions, which he at first accepted as endearments, however false the reasoning they implied, now became distasteful.

Why so fond of being a fright *to him,* he might reasonably argue! The compliment was more expensive than pleasant. In all other eyes the desire of her heart was to look lovely. No matter how insignificant the persons, no matter even how disliked, for them she

would put on her brightest and best; in their sight, she would be as the star of the morning. To please those for whom she did not care a rush she took boundless pains; to look well in the eyes of affection she never dreamed of making an effort. By the Stranger over the way she would not have been caught in untidy attire for the world; by Love, in whose fidelity and partiality she lived, she never for an instant cared how she might be seen!

Ah! what multitudes of foolish and cruel mistakes of this kind, have in all ages innocently planted thorns in the pillow of wedded life! They originate possibly in the idea, which in some heads is a conviction, that love is blind. There never was such an enormous mistake as this, the parent of others. Love may possibly be blind now and then (partially so) before marriage: but when he has once paid his visit to the matrimonial altar, how he opens his eyes. Love blind! Why, married love is astonishingly keen-eyed, and can see right through the full moon into next month.

How should even simple Mr. Swansdowne, with love looking out from his lids, fail at last to perceive the grave distinction between neatness and negligence! But thousands of women still living have no faith in this fact of perception. They cannot or will not understand what a wonderful oculist matrimony is, and that a gold ring has a magic cure for Cupid's defective vision. They go on like Mrs. Swansdowne, charming everybody but their husbands; dressing for nobodies, delighting strangers, looking eminently becoming when the one pair of eyes are away; but for him whose taste should be most studied, "Oh, anything will do!"

They have woven the spell of youth and beauty around him, and they foolishly imagine that it will work enchantments, when its bright hues fade into the neutral

tints of mid-life, or the drab-colour of the slattern. They came, saw, and conquered; and now they forget to secure the prize, and provide against defeat. They stamped the image of elegance and order upon his mind, and forget that the obverse of that image is quite as easily impressed.

The reasoning of these fair conquerors (every one of them is in imminent danger of a fall) amounts to this:

"He prefers me to all the world, therefore I shall take no pains to please him."

"His opinion is of more importance to me than anything else in existence, therefore there is no necessity to look well in his eyes."

"He has devoted to me his love and his life, and therefore I shall lavish the pleasant allurements of my finery upon other people; anything will do for dear Joe!"

Mrs. Swansdowne the beautiful, found to her cost that her adoring lover, afterwards her admiring husband, could turn caustic critic in due season, and sharp were the remonstrances of tongue as well as look which every day brought forth. Sometimes they had their effect: girls and mama were "fit to be seen" before breakfast. At others, they would show their respect for his opinion, by a tremendous scamper, and general clearing up of litters, as he knocked at the door; reappearing after a short absence, with manifest symptoms about them of a recent and rapid ordeal at the toilet.

The bad habit was checked, not cured; so the girls were sent off to school, to be instructed in the art of running shoes down at heel, pinning up holes in muslin, and fastening hair upon a plan favourable to its becoming agreeably loose or gracefully undone. Mrs. Swansdowne stayed at home cultivating the mystery of tossing one thing here and another there, then sweeping all into a corner at the first note of an arrival, and

rushing upstairs to render her ill-used beauty presentable.

Swansdowne, unable to work a reform, surveyed his late idol with indifference. When she "got herself up" for society, and looked lovely as of old, he saw no trace of the temporary divinity, but recognised only the habitual slattern. He saw but the wife of his home, not the wife of the world.

At length, as he could not improve *her*, he resolved to deteriorate *himself;* so that, by a more equal balance of faults, they might be more on a footing. He therefore took fervently to drinking, as the vice most proper to the man who marries a sloven. But his taste for neatness did not desert him here; he took even his liquors neat, as a constant, delicate, and final rebuke to his wife: who however, for her part, far gone in disfigurement as she was, could not be persuaded to take to sackcloth and ashes.

The tenants who succeeded these were the Fitzeagle family. They took possession with an air of condescension and dignity, as though the castle built for their progenitors, before the Conquest was dreamed of, was undergoing repair. With what a proud step they trod the floor, and what more than independence, what affluence was in their looks!

Great people visited them, and sometimes they visited great people. When they thus went forth, aristocracy was afoot, proud in its humility. Their looks fell upon the surrounding neighbourhood as on persons and places remote from all their associations, and parts of an inferior order of things.

One thing was pretty clear; they must have ample means of living. Want seemed to be a century's march

behind them; labour could never have soiled a finger of that family since Adam dug his garden. Independent, if not superfluously rich, they must unquestionably be; they lived well, past all doubt, though how they lived exactly, nobody exactly knew; they were proud, and anything but poor; so said all.

But had these knowing people been shut up with the Fitzeagles for a single day in that family apartment, could they have taken a point of survey from the keyhole, the tale must have had a different termination. What a deadly, sickening, starving struggle between poverty and pride must then have been laid bare, in all its hourly and momentarily extremities of anguish and horror, to the eyes of living witnesses. But on these scenes no man ever looked; of their existence no one ever dreamed.

To what a strait was the haughty, famished father reduced! Plenty had once been his; fortune, inferior to his birth, yet a solid wall and barrier between him and need. It crumbled away, and then fell, and the icy waters of penury rolled in upon him, steeping him to the lips. All the energy left to life then, was exercised in the great struggle for appearance; to keep up appearances demanded the sacrifice of nights as well as days. The whole after business of existence was merged in hourly experiments to solve the grand problem—how little life could exist upon, and how much it could conceal. To go without a dinner was the easiest part of it; to seem to have had a good one, under such circumstances, was the difficulty. Nobody knew they had not dined, but the sense of their own guilt looked pallidly out of their faces.

The instant some grand visitor had taken his departure, the hard labour appointed for each day of the dreary week was resumed. The needle was again plied, assidu-

ously and long, by the fair, soft, tired fingers to which necessity had taught skill; the little drawing, or the trifling ornament, or the child's toy, was proceeded with, though with a heart desponding over the thought that at the meanest possible price its sale might yet be difficult to effect; and the pen was once more seized, in the vague, wild hope that another anonymous translation from Lucretius or Horace, another treatise on abstruse subjects by an unknown hand, might, if offered at once to the bookseller, prove luckier than the last.

And when the miserable pittance came, if by blessed fortune it came at all, how few of the bare necessaries of life could they afford to buy! Poorer than the poorest, luxuries were necessaries to them. *They* must provide at any cost for external effect; they must buy for daily wear, abroad or at home, more than absolute want required; they must feast the world's eye with tokens that the fell tooth of hateful, hungry, wolfish Poverty was *not* gnawing their hearts within them, and calling ravenous looks into their eyes, which they could ill subdue.

Nay more; they must provide the small stock of wine, the inexpensive, yet not easily obtained delicacy, for the unsuspecting visitor known in better times; who, as the door closed upon him, must have died almost of humiliation and pity, could he have possibly surmised the havoc he had made in their little hospitable store; could he have seen how, when he was gone, poverty took pride's place, and collected the scanty fragments of the repast, as things precious in the sight of want, sparing them from present appetite, however sharp; could he have dreamed that the very remnants of what they had proffered their guest, were more than they dare allow themselves.

And if to the needful meal which home so rarely provided, they were happily invited abroad, which often happened, was this a source of practical relief? Never; and very rarely could the apparent benefit be accepted. The one sumptuous dinner, free of charge, involved expenses greater than the cost of many weeks' living; the very gratuity to a servant would exceed the price of some daily meals: for those who give by the standard of pride instead of poverty, give the more largely because they are poor; and to many, at some period or turn of life, must the reflection have come, "If I could well afford to spend this guinea as I here must do, there would be no occasion to spend one sixpence of it."

It is parted with *because* it is wanted.

The horrible, unceasing, heart-wearing struggle continued; but it became sterner and more difficult. Pride grew more and more out at elbows, and poverty the more plainly grinned through the holes. The contrast between the out-door and the in-door man was less and less; to cheaper quarters, nearer the roof, the strugglers were removed, when I lost sight of them.

It was not until the deathbed of the uncompromising father promised speedy relief to all wants, that pride relaxed its last convulsive grasp, and consented by its own sacrifice to accept for others a release.

Other tenants followed in succession, stopping but a short time, or presenting only ordinary features of contradiction in character. One of them was Double, a well-known politician of those days; some of his descendants, I hear, are figuring about Westminster to this hour. He was a gay, incautious, fervent talker; stanch and uncompromising in opposition, and so firm a friend to public principles that he never admitted a minister to be in the right.

Half the day he would hold his assembly in the apartment; a set of debaters congregating, whose stay sometimes caused me a little alarm; for this fact I soon discovered from their conversation, that if each of them in turn were not speedily summoned to St. James's, to take the supreme direction of the government, the country must inevitably go to ruin.

Double was great as the leader of the Opposition, and the whole assembly proclaimed his merits in one particular, his consistency. He had always been of one opinion, had always identified power with oppression, and always spoke openly. There was no Dr. Johnson there to report the speeches; but some pretty treason was spoken now and then, and the entire administration was inimitably scandalised. It was pleasing also to observe that where a politician's public conduct could not be conveniently impeached, his personal character was easily discovered to be infamous.

Double, however, though the world knew it not—such secrets find their way into keyholes—was more writer than orator, and, as it turned out, greater ministerially than in opposition. I wondered, at first, what on earth he could be sitting up half the night for; writing, writing, and then carefully sealing. At last, one night, pleased perhaps with his performance, he commenced reading.

Double was a government hack. He composed for the press rapturous laudations on the character of every member of the ministry; he defended all their measures, and defamed all their adversaries, the chiefs of his own party, of course, and all his personal friends who happened to be of sufficient importance.

As Double's consequence increased, he ventured upon writing a tremendous pamphlet against himself, which

might have gained him distinction, had not the papers perversely fallen into the hands of a Marplot, who recognised the fine Roman hand. After this, Double mounted to the regions of the garretteer.

The next tenant, Josias Oakby called, was a solitary man. As he entered upon his tenancy, all concerned with the occupation of it might have prepared for a gloomy season. There was nothing prepossessing in his looks, something repulsive in his manner, nothing conciliatory in his tones. Sourness and severity were in his visage, and a husk of misanthropy all over him.

He looked pryingly into *me*, as he tried the lock of the door, and finding that to be right, he inspected other fastenings, fixed his writing-desk, carelessly arranged a few books, stirred up his fire, and was at home.

How at that moment stood his account with the world, which spoke not well of him, regarding him as a once-sheltering tree from whose boughs now fall poison-drops!

He had been rich in youth, and lavishly generous. Careless to conceal, though careless of praise, his bounty found tongues to proclaim it, and the reputation he innocently acquired, was deemed proof positive of his ostentation and pride of pocket. Apt to bestow on impulse, and almost uninquiringly, his beneficence was rankly abused, and he was abused with it, for profligately encouraging vice and dissipation. Large sums given and squandered, larger lent on securities good as nutshells; charity perverted by villany and deception to corrupt ends; and upright worldly dealing seeking just returns, construed into hardness and avarice; he buttoned his pocket, turned his back upon the world, and appeared to walk away from it as far as he could.

His suitors saw little of him, his assailants less; to the first he turned a face, into which, if the milk of kindness flowed yet uncurdled in his heart, no drop of it had found its way to mingle with the vinegar and gall; and to the last, he lent an ear as if he would draw from virulent misrepresentation an odd kind of inwardly-chuckling amusement. The universal verdict was that he had been purse-proud in his gifts, grasping in his loans, unprosperous and disappointed in both, and had turned misanthrope preparatory to a misership.

Josias Oakby, on the contrary, had been generous and disinterested in all his deeds; he had been charitable for the sake of charity; kind and good to human nature, for the very love of it, faults and all. He had been grossly mistaken, abused, cheated; and under a sense of such rewards, he had now become——

A knock at the door! A suitor is announced, and refused admission. Another is named, with the like result. A letter is brought, and returned unopened, all in that handwriting ordered to be rejected invariably. A second letter; this may be left, but there is no answer. Another visitor, a petitioner; well, *he* may come in, but he takes nothing by the motion, moving as the tale is. There is evidently no more milk in Josias, than in a "male tiger."

I saw him smile, there was a grim smile on his visage, like a moonbeam on a standing pool, as the begging, half-choked wretch left the room.

Josias stood before me, a sort of Timon in low life. The man's soul was evidently a blank book, as far as good deeds were concerned; but records of hatred and malice, uncharitableness, and revenge, blotted its pages abundantly.

More suitors; the memory of his ostentation attracts them still, and perhaps what they formerly extracted

from his love of fame,' they now hope to squeeze from his eccentricity. But they come in vain; flatly and hopelessly repulsed, dismissed with hard looks and cold words, letters sent back as they came, or laid unopened by, this is for the most part their fate. One or two seemed to have a slight chance; a strange face, a woman's, with hot tears trickling down it, once appeared to move him for an instant; but the tears were not hot enough to thaw the ice round his heart, and, like the rest, she went empty away.

Towards the close of the wintry day, he went forth to dinner, vowing that he had a huge appetite; he seemed pleased with his work of rejection; he had been petitioned, almost knelt to, and he had been merciless.

Josias bore a strong resemblance, not to a man who wanted his dinner, but to a cannibal, who had been all day feeding on human hearts stuffed with grief.

On his return in the evening, the lights, the fire, the scene shut in, had a cheerful, exhilarating look; Josias Oakby crossed the room, like a scowl on a bright face. Then he drew his desk towards the fire, and his chair to the desk; opened letters and read; read again and answered; a book, it was a banker's book, was taken from a drawer, and blank forms were carefully filled up; entries were made, and more letters were written; and the evening devoted to business passed away, and Josias took a fair-sized goblet of brandy-and-water before he went to bed.

As he crossed the threshold, with the light held before him, rendering every line and character of his face visible as in brightest sunshine, the change was quite startling. The same face was there, yet it looked positively handsome.

Josias Oakby passed his days in doing good, and when the day was short he added his evening to it. He did

it in his own way, but it was a better one than the way of his youth. He ascertained the nature of the soil before he sowed. He gave away, he no longer flung away, his money, his warnings, his friendship. He discovered the line which parts a wise charity from that which is merely amiable.

One condition alone was imperative, secrecy; where gratitude could only be expressed by betrayal, the supply was stopped. So protected, he could go on, and be at peace with the misjudging world. He was content, nay glad, to appear crabbed, flinty, even fierce; and in truth, he was accounted rock, yet it needed but a touch, and the pure living stream of kindness leaped forth.

The good old man! for such he soon became, "frosty but kindly!" The grimness of his smile grew wonderfully sweet and delicious. He seemed more and more to enjoy his mask and his laugh underneath it. He was human, and loved a little trickery.

When he had spent profitably a few hours, and had done a world of good, which few would have believed, even had they witnessed it, he rubbed his hands, and with a flood of savage fun in his face, cried,

"It 's as good as a comedy!"

PART IV.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

MRS. FIXBURY was a fair representative of that numerous class of ladies, grandmothers, mothers, and daughters, single, wedded, or widowed, who are so passionately fond of their homes that they can with difficulty be persuaded to go out.

No minister ever equalled a woman for staying in,

when it suits her, and it always suited Mrs. Fixbury exactly. To women of her no-turn of mind, and of her corporeal fixity of tenure, the open air is one immense superfluity. "Out of doors" is to them what land was to the inveterate salt water rover, "a thing he could never see the use of."

> Like cherubs round an altar-piece, they cling
> To the fireside.

They must confess, for their parts, that they do love their home, and that's the truth. They are not ashamed to acknowledge, if people want to know the real fact of the matter, that they do take a little pride in their house, and do like to enjoy it of all things. Going out occasionally is all very well, no doubt, very right, very proper, and very pleasant, in some cases; and they might like as well as other people to make a call on somebody they don't care for, or to perform the tour of the shops when they have no intention of buying, or to look in at an exhibition not worth a shilling, or to walk under a broiling sun until caught in a soaking shower. But it so happens that they can always find something else to do; indeed they can never find a single minute's leisure even for dreaming of indulging such roving propensities. There is quite enough at home to forbid all thoughts of going out, and on any such errands and embassies, the thing would be impossible.

As for recreation, thank Heaven, they can find amusement as well as cares in-doors. Whenever they are out of spirits they can go up and dust their drawing-rooms. As for health, they should die in a week if condemned to such gadding about. They have no notion, not they, of rambling hither and thither like the Wandering Jewess. They have a home of their

own, and they are persuaded that every right-minded woman who has a home of her own has something or other to do in it.

How the H.'s and the M.'s manage they can't think! Those women are always out; and what must be the state of affairs in the home department they couldn't guess if it were to save their lives! And how the foolish people's brains bear all the whirl and worry of such a life they are as much at a loss to imagine. It amazes them to think how anybody, not quite crazed, can go all through the town continually leaving cards, staring in at bazaars and shop-windows, dragging themselves edgeways through muddy mobs, or (what is worse than all), walking in quieter places merely for the sake of walking: seeing nothing, saying nothing, hearing nothing, doing nothing, except walking! And all this when they have a home to go to, and plenty, no doubt, to do there!

Good domestic creatures, like Mrs. Fixbury, are clearly of opinion there is a class of people who should be known in society as the houseless rich, almost as pitiable as the houseless poor, who demonstrate by their habits the existence of a kind of elegant, luxurious, and voluntary vagrancy; a prescriptive posting from parish to parish. They also see established a species of legal offence, which may be called a system of friendly and polite burglary, comprised in the custom of breaking into the houses of acquaintances in the open day, any decent time before dinner, and stealing therein fifteen minutes and upwards of irrecoverable time, "of no use to anybody but the owner."

To some earnest appeal on her husband's part, some gentle remonstrance with Mrs. Fixbury on the subject of her stay-at-home habits, some solicitation that she would make a call in such a street, or go and spend an

hour or two with her oldest friends in their new house, her reply would be—

"And havn't I a house here? Why should a person who has a home of her own want to go to other people's? Now you know I love my home, and I'm sure I find plenty to do in it. What time have *I* for going out? Why, only last week I made a desperate effort at your anxious and urgent entreaty, and at one period of the experiment, although with so much to do, I really half-believed that I should get out after all. It is true I did progress towards the desired end so far as to succeed in getting my bonnet on, but before I could quite tie the strings of it I found it was time to take it off. So off went my things again, of course; and I remember" (here I could see her little eyes sparkle with delightful reflections) "I remember I had a capital job all the rest of that day in dusting those dear books!"

What! was Mrs. Fixbury a passionate lover of books? Was she a great reader? Perhaps she was a writer too; and the beloved volumes were her own works, handsomely bound! Ah, this at once accounts for her joy in tossing off her bonnet, and staying at home with maternal tenderness and delight to dust and handle, arrange and re-arrange, those darlings of English literature, those patterns of intellectual binding!

No, the reader is altogether in the wrong. On the authority of a keyhole it may be stated that Mrs. Fixbury never in private or public wrote a word. Then it will be supposed that she was a great devourer of the writings of others. Not at all; she never read a book through in her life, and had scarcely seen the inside of the treasures she took a joy in dusting. Then they were gifts, and she set a precious value on them for the sake of the giver; no such thing. Then she

prized them because they had been long in her family, and reminded her of her childhood, and her buried parents. Stuff!

Well, then, why on earth did the unwriting, unperusing, anti-literary Mrs. Fixbury apostrophize the set as "those dear books?" Ah, that is a mystery which can only be solved by such knowledge as may be picked up by the small sprite that lodges in a keyhole. The point goes in a direct line to the very heart of Mrs. Fixbury's character.

That lady, if minute and constant observation have not utterly failed of its object, intensely loved what she called "her home." A person more gifted in discriminating the niceties of language would have simply called it "her house." Taking pride in her house, she fancied herself fond of her home. Many people fall into this capital error of confounding a house with a home, and of endeavouring to make others believe that they have both, when, alas! they have only one. But the confusion of terms is convenient, and saves family explanations.

Home, in Mrs. Fixbury's idea of it, meant certain rooms, with suitable fixtures and furniture. That was all! Observe. She was ardently attached to her home! that is, in other words, she had a wonderful liking for her nice apartments. She had an exquisite sense of all that is most elevated and refined in domestic associations! that is, in other words, she had a tender regard for every inanimate thing belonging to her on which her daily household eye rested.

Home never meant, in her clear, plain, domestic understanding, no, never meant Husband and Children, and Friends; the cheerful Meal, the social Fireside, and the silent Pillow; it only meant a collection of com-

mon-place conveniences and ornaments, sanctified and endeared by hourly use and habit.

A picture out of her own house would have been to Mrs. Fixbury's glance as the blank wall behind it; but hung in her own room it became as part of herself, being, that is to say, part of her household property, of her home. Her personal effects were the same to her as her person. When she alluded to those "dear books," she applied to them an epithet due equally to every article around her. She would have spoken in the same tone of those dear bellows, or those dear nut-crackers. They were hers. What is the love which some bear to pups and canary-birds compared with that which settles on mahogany and steel sundries. The poet paints the human heart as sometimes

> Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones
> And on the vacant air.

Mrs. Fixbury's heart

> Wasted its kindliness on sticks and stools,
> And on the elbow-chair.

Household furniture purchased but last week was precious in her eyes as relics dug at Pompeii. She had a liking; but why mince the true phrase! she had an affection for her sofas and tables. They were visible domesticities; they were a portion of that domestic reality of which she was the conscious centre; without them, she could not feel that she had a home.

Now, if the reader, wandering and groping about in the odd dark corners of the world, have not yet encountered a lady wrapped up in a fond regard for her own fire-irons and buffet, her harpsichord and window-curtains, then he has missed what he assuredly would have known had he been born sooner and encountered Mrs. Fixbury. Children and husband! Oh

no! A sentiment towards these, as properly the first objects of her affection, might be stored away in some remote recess of her nature, an abstract thing, unfitted for actual use, and never to be brought into play; but husband and children had no share in the practical cares, sympathies, and interests of her life, which were lavished upon her chairs and tables.

It was lest *these* should suffer that the children were packed off at the earliest possible age to a grandmother, or to a school; instead of receiving at home the education their father desired for them.

"Now, Fixbury, not another word," she would say. "It is quite impossible, and a long way out of the question, that children can be allowed to run about my place now that I have brought it into such order. If you have no regard for those cushions, I have. It is proper that somebody, at all events, should have an eye to home and its enjoyments; the children must go. If it hadn't been for the new carpet indeed, little John might have staid at home for a few months longer, but you know it's not in mortal power to keep him or any of them from trespassing in these rooms. Besides, I'm very sure that the regular duties of home will prevent me from paying the smallest attention to the children. Domestic cares would leave me no time for maternal tasks; and as for a governess, there again; I'm very sure these chairs will lose their beauty quite soon enough without new comers coming to help spoil them; and, moreover, I shouldn't by any means like to see my house littered all over with French grammars. However, one objection is as good as a thousand; I don't choose to have those chairs spoiled. We must either part with the chairs or the children; and such chairs as those we shall never get again, for that money!"

But holidays arrive in due course, and bring with

them in most homes a happy *réunion*. That time never arrived, according to the handsome clock on Mrs. Fixbury's chimney-piece.

"Fixbury, how can you think of such a thing! how meditate anything so destructive to one's peaceful, neatly-regulated home! Have them all here during the holidays! Quite impossible, quite. Nice curtains they would make me, with their blind-man's-buff and bo-peep. John would have one of those jars down before he went to bed, and most likely send a marble through the mirror next morning. Think of the finger-marks we should find upon this door. Of all things, I hate to see a beautiful polished table like this smeared all round the edge; butter, barley-sugar, or jam, it's equally disagreeable. Oh, no; we must go and see them all at their grandmama's. The house will fall into terrible disarrangement while I'm absent, but still we must spare a day, and I must redouble my energies to correct everything on my return next morning."

At thirty-five, Mrs. Fixbury might have been supposed childless, for her children were very rarely included among the accessories of her home. In fact, they had no home, because their home was in such a state of perfection. But its mistress still had a husband to share it? Yes, if she had permitted him to feel at home when he arrived there. There, however, he very seldom was. She begged him not to come home to dinner, for although there was but a simple cutlet to cook, it threw all the house into disorder. When he had ensconced himself snugly, she entreated him to go and make a call somewhere, for she was going to be so busy, and his presence was fatal to her projects. She couldn't think of letting the sofa be drawn round the fire, or of having the high-backed chair disturbed, when she had fixed it in the very spot upon which it was always to

stand. His brother had asked him into the country for a month, and why couldn't he go? then she could have the two rooms down stairs set entirely to rights.

"Well now, Mr. Fixbury, I really must say I *do* hope you are not going to spread papers and letters all over my table after all the pains I have taken with it; such a polish as it has! if you had found a grain of dust on it, I would have forgiven your abominable insensibility to the true refinements of home. Your mind becomes daily more blunted to the real delights of domestic life. Pray mind the ink; mind the ink, Mr. Fixbury, if you please. I hope you are aware that there are already five or six large spots on your new writing-desk! Oh, you must not touch those books; let me beg of you not to take a book down now; not to-night; I have dusted and arranged them all in the nicest manner possible. Mr. Fixbury, there is no draught in this room, and I can't have those curtains drawn on any pretence whatever; I'm sure I would bear *any* degree of cold; they can never perhaps be put into the same folds again."

At the close of some such harangue, Mr. Fixbury, perhaps, would ring the bell, to guard in a more innocent way against a chill.

"Some more coals, Kitty."

"Coals can't be put on just at present," interposed Mrs. Fixbury; "don't you see that the hearth has just been swept up? I believe you like to see every place in disorder. Spare the fire-place, pray."

His boots when he entered, would exhibit traces of the street, and perhaps in that condition find their way by an innate depravity to the edge of the fender; or his pocket would be emptied of some miscellanies upon the sofa or the side-table; or he heedlessly scattered in, the impetuosity of appetite, some crumbs beside his

chair at dinner; or he left his newspapers, price-currents, and shipping-lists lying about, as if in savage disdain of decency; and consequently Mrs. Fixbury devoted every minute of the waking hours which he spent in the house to an endeavour to drive him out of it. Perseverance seldom fails of success.

But what a change when he took his hat and went out. She had heard his knock at the door with an aching heart; but it leaped up in joy when he departed. With sad and almost streaming eyes she had followed almost all his movements about the room; smoothing with careful hand the chair-cover where he had sat, and reviving the gloss on the table upon which he had rested his profane elbow. Sighs spoke her anguish, when words failed, as she saw her domestic economy disturbed, and every line of her face betrayed anxiety, let him turn as he might. But, the instant he closed the door, had he peeped in again, he would not have known the face of his melancholy, careworn, and complaining wife. Dismay at his presence gave way instantaneously to delight.

"Kitty, come! Good news for you! Your master has gone out for the day, and now, my good girl, we can have up the stair-carpets. Now, girls, where are you? Come, be quick. We have a charming long morning before us, and, thank Heaven! we can take those hangings down and give them a good shake!"

What happy hours were hers that day! Her blood flowed through her busy veins one tide of pleasure. There she was upstairs and downstairs, and both almost at the same time; directing Kitty, superintending Sally, hurrying one, retarding another, perplexing both, inspecting the progress of their work every minute, and doing it after them all over again herself. Then, lest a dozen particles of dust, or a single particle, should have

escaped upstairs, how she would glide about *the* room of the house, darting a keen suspicious glance at every object in turn; redusting a crowd of nic-nacs, brightening a glass-shade here and a china-jar there, needlessly rubbing a bit of shining mahogany, adjusting the tongs and poker with the nicest accuracy, wondering if their dazzling polish could possibly be increased, and longing to take down the dear books once more, to rub with perilous vigour their clean gilt-edged tops.

And then when all was done, how she yet continued to go over her work, arranging again and again, and surveying her furniture as a fond mother looks at the family she rejoices in. And not less careful was she indeed of every item of it.

"Mind, my good girl; pray take care; if you were to scratch that it would break my heart." "The screen! be careful; if anything were to happen to it—" "Ah, that darling vase! now hear what I say, destroy that, and you destroy me!"

Many mothers, when referring to past times, and collecting their reminiscences, are frequently observed to take for their guide the date of some piece of good fortune, or more frequently still, of some sad calamity, that had happened to their children. They recall a particular circumstance because it occurred when Louisa had the bit of bank-stock left her, or when Master Harry had the measles, or Tom broke his poor collar-bone. Mrs. Fixbury's reminiscences were all dated agreeably to this principle, only substituting chattels for children. The vicissitudes occurring among these always guided her calculations.

"It was the very day the pier-glass was cracked;" or, "I remember the whole affair, we had our new bed-furniture that winter;" or, "Don't you recollect? I was dusting that identical little bronze Mercury there,

at the very moment the news came;" or perhaps her reminiscence would be of a more touching character:

"Ah, yes, well indeed do I remember the event, for it happened just at the very time when that dreadful Welch girl, in her cruel clumsiness, knocked over this dear little table, and broke its pretty claw, which has worn a small plate of iron inside, in consequence of the distressing fracture, from that day to this."

With such constant cares, and such exalted sympathies to detain her ever at home, how should she possibly dissipate the household spell! how get out even for a morning to see her children or visit her friends; to seek pleasure or secure health; to take exercise for her own sake or to gratify the open air partialities of her husband. She never *did* get out; or, as she phrased it, she never *could*. From summer to summer she enjoyed scarcely a breath of fresh air save what she drew through me. If at the open window a tide of breezy life for a moment poured in, she pronounced it to be positively reviving; but then, "You must shut the window; there is a little dust, I think; to say nothing of blacks from that chimney opposite!"

"What a lovely spring morning," she would cry! "beautiful, quite beautiful. What a clear blue sky, and the tops of even these London trees look wonderfully bright and green. Delicious morning! Kitty, I've been thinking that, as we happen to have but little to do this fine day, we may as well take down these pictures, and I can help you to dust the backs of them; perhaps we may succeed in arranging them rather differently; that would be delightful!"

Visiting nobody, nobody visited her; a happy, a most essential consequence: for what in the name of all her goods and chattels could she have done with visitors? Company would have crushed her with dire affliction

for her furniture. Ordinary folks have fine things about them for others to see; Mrs. Fixbury's pleasure was to look at them herself. It was her own dear home, and she was always so fond of it; she did enjoy *that!* At forty years of age she was known, where known at all, as The Domesticated; or, the Woman who never went Out. Yet out she was doomed to go at length; for a removal to a different quarter of the town became indispensable, and Mr. Fixbury was ruthless on the score of furniture and fixtures.

Heavens, what a morning was that of the removal! When the van, with a suspicious-looking set of springs, drew up at the door, anybody would have supposed that it was a hearse come to know if Mrs. Fixbury was ready. A world of sighs escaped her as rude hands lifted her cherished chattels, and horrid fingers smeared her shining goods; handling all things, not as humanity gently touches living objects which it loves, but as surgeons knock about dry bones that have no feeling. Here was a rug tossed upon damask-curtains, there a bit of Dresden peeping out of a coal-skuttle. In her pale, thin face there was a presentiment of evil. She was like a sensitive plant being torn up by the roots. This was not removing; it was being dragged away.

As she saw the several objects of her many years of household pride carried one by one down the stairs, the hopes of life vanished with them in quick succession. She followed each favourite with her eyes, and heard it pitched into the large van with the suspicious springs. The presentiment of evil darkened more and more in her visage. As the place was cleared, left lone and naked, and the first load of moveables was driven from the door——Crash! what was that? Her face had too plainly prophesied. The pillar of a pet work-table snapped, a favourite japanned cabinet staved in, a

prized arm-chair mutilated——but something has just dropped between the wheels.

"What is it?" shrieked a voice of anguish.

"Oh, it 's nothing, nothing," replied another, composedly (it was the voice of Mr. Fixbury), "it is only a little carved oak bracket fallen; the clock is, fortunately, in safety, inside the vehicle."

To say that Mrs. Fixbury, under these fearful trials, in the disruption of what was dearest to her, looked aggrieved, would be tame language; she looked agonised, aghast: but whether, when thus torn from her home, she went soon to that which is held on a far longer lease, is doubtful. The only thing positive is, that a few months after the removal, when Mr. Fixbury paid a visit of business to his old quarters, I observed there was a crape upon his hat; and yet it must be acknowledged that he looked unusually cheerful.

* * * * *

Mr. and Mrs. Crossworth, when they took possession of the apartment over whose extent by eye and ear I hold observant sway, had been married too long to have nothing to talk about when sitting together after dinner, and yet not long enough to have found out the unprofitable subjects. They started off in conversation without thinking of the conflicting points, and floated down the tide unconscious of its treachery.

The gentleman was thirty and plain, the lady was twenty-three and pretty. He had an austere, cold look that but half concealed some warmth of feeling underneath; she had a languishing and amiable air, that yet seemed to give token of a spirit not incapable, upon occasion, of flashing and proving formidable. There was something of melancholy about his mouth, and a careless smile upon hers.

"I have been thinking a good deal, Charlotte," said

Mr. Crossworth, "about that poor family in Kent, who applied to you yesterday."

"Dear me, Charles," returned Mrs. Crossworth, rather quickly, "what an eminently disagreeable subject to turn your after-dinner thoughts upon!"

"It is painful, certainly; the weather threatens to be terribly severe, and before they lose their little cottage—"

"Now, I must entreat, Charles, that you will not go one step further upon that ground, or you will bring a whole troop of starved and frozen sufferers, the most horrid picture of want and misery imaginable, directly before my mind's eye. I shall see it all in a moment, infant in arms, and white-haired grandmother included. You know how susceptible I am. Take your wine and be at peace."

Melancholy more plainly marked the drawn-down corners of Mr. Crossworth's mouth, and at the corners of his eyes, moreover, the faintest of all conceivable reproaches peeped out.

"But, Charlotte," he said, gently, "something must be done!"

"Very well, Charles, then do it; but do not, I pray, under cover of the purest humanity, have the cruelty to distress me by conjuring up so shocking a spectacle. I always observe that very tender people are apt to be very hard upon those they love. Because their own kind hearts are bleeding at a tale of sorrow, they must thrust daggers into the kind hearts of their friends. If you find the subject so very painful, how barbarous of you to introduce it when I was indulging in a thousand happy thoughts. Drink your wine, Charles, do!"

The gay smile with which this was uttered did not communicate itself to those lips, which, nevertheless, obediently sipped the suggested glass, and Mr. Cross-

worth, gravely and tenderly, in a voice sometimes tremulous with the benevolent feeling that prompted his words, proceeded to explain that he mentioned the melancholy matter to her because to her the appeal had been made; that he mentioned it just then, because whatever was done must be resolved upon that very night. He could not think of allowing her to contribute, in however slight a degree; though he owned that charity in this case was a costlier virtue than he could often afford to indulge. But the case was one of roofless, famished misery, and he avowed that the tug at his heart-strings had torn his purse-strings asunder too, and thus his sympathy and his money both flowed out together.

Mrs. Crossworth said, in reply, that the case was far too prodigiously disagreeable to be contemplated. She would rather that Charles should pay much than say even a little. Such distresses were not meant to be talked of; she could not bear to think of them. She always hated these real life tragedies; and would infinitely rather give, if she could spare it, ten times the sum asked for, than listen to a doleful petition. Her system was to keep on the sunny side of things, and never to distress herself but for some good reason. If she could relieve the wretched narrator of his woes, that would be quite another thing. If her sighs were balm, her tears diamonds, the poor man should have them in plenty; but why inflict wounds upon herself when she could not heal his! Why listen, when she could only lament! She detested all gratuitous disagreeables, and her heart was closed against them for ever!

And then, as though her heart were indeed closed to pity, whose gentle dews had fallen there and found all barren, as though by an effort of the will the spirit could revel in an unfading summer, and all the frosts

of life be dissipated by the magic of a smile; she rose from the table, and quitting the room, turned the most laughing, mocking look possible upon the displeased though polite husband, who held the door open for her as she skipped giddily by.

Here, then, was a sorrowful, a sickening spectacle! Youth, loveliness, a lively temper, a quick sense of pleasure, charms to fascinate, the capacity to enjoy; grace, spirit, gaiety, and brightness of the blood; all suddenly obscured, crushed, buried under an insensibility hard as a rock; a crust of selfishness, like thick-ribbed ice! How hideous she looked with her sweet happy face. Yes; this was her theory, and her practice strictly conformed to it. Suffering, sickness, sorrow in its hundred shapes; want, nakedness, hunger; the sharp struggle with misery, and the last horrid writhing under its onward rolling wheels; these excited not her pity, not merely her impatience, but her very hate!

"Of all things I hate sights of woe!" "Do not speak to me about distress, for I detest it!"

These were phrases familiar to her beautiful lips as smiles themselves. Selfishness never spoke more expressively. It was so easy to decide beforehand upon the incapacity to relieve; and that done, the wretchedness that sought relief was just as easily dismissed. When the languid, amiable Charlotte had (without the least difficulty) persuaded herself that it was perfectly impossible for such a hand as hers ever to lessen by one feather's weight the heavy, and too often the intolerable burden of mortal misery, she had become quite convinced of her exemption from the necessity of keeping it in view, or recognising by thought, sigh, or word, its ever-present existence.

And that such calculating coldness of soul should be neighboured by such rich and lively blood! That such

marble hardness should hold so soft a seat! That such insensibility should be so full of life! That one who cared so little for others should have a form to win homage from all!

Mr. Crossworth, when he had shut the door, returned to the table, and having poured out a glass of wine, looked as though some such reflections as the above were passing silently in his mind. But he speedily filled his glass again, and as rapidly emptied it; indeed this ceremony was repeated somewhat eagerly several times; and then, during a pause, his thoughts appeared to be slowly undergoing a revolution. Sadness and severity had vanished from his face, his eye brightened, and his brow was visibly lighter. He seemed to meditate yet more cheerfully, and refilled his glass.

"Who knows!" he muttered, as he set it down empty. "Charlotte's system may be the right one after all! There is nothing like a second thought. Charity is expensive; and, by the way, wine-merchants—the unconscionable rogues—are not so easily paid in these times. One must have a check upon one's luxuries in some direction or other; and, by Jove! a man can better do without benevolence than without port."

The wine was again raised between his eye and the light. It seemed to warm his brain, as it cooled his heart.

"If this costly piece of folly, which would really be sheer ostentation, and rank injustice to myself, is to be done at all, to-night the undertaking must be given by which the cottage is secured to the—how many shall I say?—just half-a-dozen poor wretches, out of the millions who are at this moment not merely beyond help, but beyond hope! What a farce is this benevolence of ours after all! Here am I, troubling my inmost soul about the fate of six drops of sorrow, while

the great ocean of misery rages unappeased and boundless. Dry up those six drops, and where is the difference? The world will wear the same look to-morrow; though my shrunk coffers assuredly will not. No, but a very different one indeed! Crossworth," he continued, addressing himself with a smile bright as the bumper he eyed admiringly, "you are a good fellow, but you must learn to control your generous propensities. You cannot afford these extravagances of the heart."

Mr. Crossworth then, closing his soliloquy, sprang up from his solitary revel, and having taken a stride or two across the room, with the manner of one who is satisfied that he has just done a wise thing, and is at least as virtuous amidst all his iniquities, as mankind in general, rang for coffee.

With the cups, re-entered Mrs. Crossworth. Husband and wife were equally in a happy humour. They sipped, smiled, and chatted. Controversy had fled the scene; all unpleasant topics were avoided; not a word was said about the hungry and the homeless; not a thought of human pain, human fortitude, human selfishness and tyranny, intruded; they were all in all to each other; and the world was to them a scene which no pauper-dwellings darkened, and in whose ordinary public paths no graves gaped for the destitute and wandering poor.

Mr. Crossworth was to go out, Mrs. Crossworth was to amuse herself at home. This was pleasantly settled between them, and tender adieus were interchanged.

"Adieu, Charlotte! Then for three whole hours, if I choose to stay so long, I am to desert you, and be forgiven!"

"Ah, Charles!" answered his pretty wife, playfully;

" reflect upon what you are doing. You are deserting Faith and Hope (united in poor me) for *Charity*.

"No, 'faith!" returned Mr. Crossworth, moving off; "I have declined, at least deferred, that melancholy affair, and am merely going to see a famous pantomime, which they have just brought out at the theatre; it is called 'Mother Goose!'"

Mrs. Crossworth, just as he was vanishing, set up one of the sweetest little laughs ever heard, so that her hero made his exit to soft music. The change of intention, and the contrast presented in it—pantomime and philanthropy, charity and Mother Goose—amused the light-hearted lady amazingly.

" Well," she cried, " commend me to his choice. A rather more agreeable way of spending his time and money, I must own. It is quite useless to attempt to alleviate people's distresses; to cry and sob over their calamities, is ridiculous; and besides, one is a little too old now to make one's self needless griefs and be miserable for nothing. But now for my delightful novel. I do think I shall have time for two volumes."

And Mrs. Crossworth, seizing a book, and settling herself very comfortably, with no intention of speedily disturbing herself, began to read; a long silence ensued, broken only every few minutes by the rustling of a leaf.

Her hard-heartedness had quite chilled me, and the air as it rushed through seemed to my fancy to have been cooled by her very breathing; such was the insensibility she had shown. More positive vices might have been pardoned in preference; had she committed some vile deed, had she branded herself as criminal, had her sins been of a more active nature, inflicting grievous injury where she owed benefits, and betraying a headlong and passionate disposition to work evil to mankind,

out of a feeling of jealousy or revenge, some excuse might have been found for her, some forbearance have been shown. As it was, I would rather the room had been empty; such a pretty, graceful thing, so young, and with the amiability of youth in her looks, and yet so hopelessly selfish, unsympathising, and frozen in heart!

Half an hour had elapsed, and she sat reading on in silence, rapidly at times, and in some excitement. I watched the play of her countenance, which I now saw was variously expressive, and indeed almost explained the course of the story as she read! Her excitement increased, and my interest grew with it. At times there was a bright glow upon her face; presently she was sad and pale. Prepared for the fire, I had not expected the softness of her aspect, the tender pity of her eyes. Soon her bosom heaved with its emotions; her little hands trembled as they turned the page; her cheeks brightened, and from her parted lips the breathing came quick and murmuringly; then, by imperceptible degrees, a more tranquil feeling crept over her; her heart still throbbed, but not violently; pity in place of terror and anguish touched her soul; her eyes traced the lines less clearly, and tears fell glitteringly upon the page. The volume dropped upon her lap; she covered her face with her hands and sobbed—fairly sobbed.

With many a heart-drawn sigh, she presently resumed her reading; her face flushed to the temples, her long lashes vainly essaying to retain the drops that gathered there. And then she read on more composedly, but with a still gravity, a fervent interest, a passionate enthusiasm, that showed how devotedly her spirit had yielded itself to the spell. If ever there was pure, ardent, unbought sympathy, it was there; if ever there was a melting, compassionate nature, it was suffering

before me. If she sat awhile mutely grieving, she would quickly brighten into hope, or thrill with fear; in every change of passion and turn of sentiment, losing self-consciousness and living only in the humanity of which she read. How divine humanity thus looked; how beautiful was that life in another's life! Earth could have nothing more heavenly to offer to the sight.

And were those the same eyes that had wilfully shut out, but an hour or two before, a picture of actual misery and despair! Was it the same heart that had not a single throb for living, breathing wretchedness, suing to it for the last succours! Was it the same Mrs. Crossworth who never shed needless tears, who shunned distress upon system, who heaved no more sighs than she could help, and detested misery like vice. The very same, and a very every-day person she was. She hated misery, and revelled in it; she had actually no heart, and yet broke it once a week over a book. The saddest, deepest afflictions hourly darkening the world around her, moved her not; but the lightest tale of sorrow, if untrue, at once turned her into a creature of exquisite sensibility. She hated the reality, and was in raptures with the representation of it. What was most repulsive in life was most seductive in a novel. People's troubles were detestable bores, but in a romance they were infinitely charming. She was steel, adamant itself, to the proofs of workhouse horrors and prison tragedies; but susceptible as a pitying angel to fictitious woe—when they "did but jest, poison in jest."

The contradiction is perhaps too common to excite frequent notice in daily life; but such a specimen of it as Mrs. Crossworth presented, was not unfairly matched by her anomalous matrimonial partner. With a hard, severe look, he was sensitive and tender in his nature; with a glad and generous face, she was stubborn and

unfeeling as a flint. He cooled and corrected the warm and kindly tendencies of his disposition, with those draughts which inflamed the native desires of most men; she heated her imagination with romantic fancies, by way of apology for her insensibility to distressing facts.

Every good resolution formed by Mr. Crossworth in the morning was sure to be effectually dissipated in the course of his comfortable musings after dinner; and every harsh, unpitying expression of Mrs. Crossworth during the day, was sure to be amply atoned for by torrents of compassionate tears at night.

As he, less and less easy, allowed sorrow for the world's wants to flow from his eyes, and sighs for unrelieved misery around his path to rend his bosom, he paid more and more frequently private visits even before dinner, to a small recess at the end of the room, containing medicine for the cure of his grief; and as her nature hardened with years, and her first slender stock of the charities and sympathies dried up and withered for want of exercise, she sat longer and longer over her blotted pages, and made atonement by sobbing more bitterly than ever over the miseries of the unreal!

CONCLUSION.

INQUIRE WITHIN.

It would ill reward the reader's curiosity to stand prying for an age into the same keyhole, or listening to the sounds that issue from it, when they bring but the same news. I might sketch a hundred occupants of this once brilliant and now faded apartment, in succession, tenant treading on the heels of tenant, rapidly as succeeded, each to the other, the inhabitants of that

palace in the eastern story, whose royal owner proudly rebuked the poor dervise for regarding it but as an inn or caravanserai. "'Who,' asked the dervise, 'lived here before you?' 'My father,' was the answer. 'And who before him?' 'My grandfather.' 'And who is to reside here after you?' 'My son.' 'Alas! then, a house that changes its residents thus, is not a palace, but a caravanserai.'"

So came and departed the lodgers over whom I kept watch; but, although the case of each differed from the other in form, it was invariably the same, or nearly the same, in spirit. In all, the double character was more or less perceptible. In many, very many indeed, the deception, the disguise, was of the thinnest texture and most ridiculous in its pretensions; it amounted but to the putting on and off a flimsy affectation, the assumption and the relinquishment of some showy folly that was thought to carry a grace with it; while in others there was the broad, deep, deliberate mask to conceal the natural face—the savage scowl, the cold sneer—or in some, and not rarer instances, the sunny smile and the kind heart.

I have seen the happy, good-natured enjoyer of his home go forth a moody, cynical mistruster of humanity, to whom it would be sport to probe the wounds of men, trying their depth, not healing them. I have seen the indulgent, doating father, when his heart had leapt up at a game of romps with his little ones, and his soul had lavished upon them its dearest and tenderest caresses, turn as he crossed the threshold into the man of marble, hard and dignified as a statue. I have seen the world's drudge and victim, having spent another dreary, desolate day in toil and bitterness abroad, return at the hour of liberation, with a face gleaming in joy, to meet his family round the fireside; and I

have seen too the successful trafficker on the world's mart, having cleared a cool hundred or so by the mere turn of the wheel, come back at eve to his hearthstone with moroseness and discontent in his visage, repinings and abject terrors in his heart, with a soul uncheered by any reflection, the blessed balm-giving thought, save of taking off, on that raw evening, all those blazing coals, which burn away so rapidly, and borrowing a little gruel of the housekeeper below.

It is unnecessary to say how often I have seen the jolly good fellow of the dinner-table converted into the sullen, shallow, shabby moraliser by supper-time; how often have I known the man of quick feelings, compelled to suppress, and screw them down as in a coffin when stung and goaded by ill-usage abroad, come home to revenge himself on his wife; how often have I beheld the choice spirit, the reigning star of company, darken into a very devil in solitude.

All these spectacles were of course of frequent occurrence; and I was equally familiar with the broad distinction to be marked in the selfsame persons, when the spattered, tattered, indoor garb was exchanged for the fashion and finery designed to flash in a different scene; when the lean, peevish, decrepit valetudinarian of the chamber, after the proper number of hours religiously devoted to the sole purposes of life—repairing ravages, gilding decay, and making ruins (where they cannot possibly be longer hidden) look at least premature and wilful—lounged out into the open air, an idle, easy, sprightly trifler with time, who possibly meant, some fifteen summers hence, to think of appointing a distant day for looking a little elderly.

One or two specimens of contradiction in character may, however, be added to the list of anomalies comprised in my faithful records. The first shall be a

single gentleman lodger, Mr. M'Sickley. He was a commonplace, yet a rarity too; in composition wonderfully curious, and yet his fellow is to be met with everywhere. Anomalous as he was, it is impossible to deny that he was a pattern of consistency; the contradictory quality that distinguished him was without change, and the discord at last became harmonious.

M'Sickley, when he first entered his new abode, seemed little likely to occupy it long; yet he was its solitary tenant for many years, seeming to possess the lives of several lodgers, even of a generation. Judging by appearances, he was past recovery at Lady-Day, when he took possession; at the Midsummer quarter, he was half dead; by Michaelmas he had one foot in the grave; and at Christmas he was announced to be only still alive. In short, he was the same man in all seasons; every "trying month" found him much as he was the month before; and at each successive visit of summer-heat or winter-snow, he was so bad that he could not easily be worse. His snug family-vault, and his comfortable sofa drawn round to the fire, were as one and the same thing, they were so close to each other.

Mr. M'Sickley was often *given* over; but he never *gave* over. Everybody said he was a mere snuff of a candle, but he continued to burn in the socket. Friends declared that it was all up, and yet he would hold out. Relations, who were to profit by his departure, grew angry at his prolonged stay, and he plagued them by living on, and on; and he evidently liked it. Keen observers predicted that he would be a great deal worse in November, and he was at that period much the same. More kindly ones declared, that sad as his condition was, he would rally in the spring; and on the first of May he was as bad as he could be.

People who were sincerely attached to him, put off their trips to the Continent, that they might be in town to attend his funeral; but he ordered a hackney-coach, and went to dine with them instead. It is astonishing what a distance the brink of the grave is from the actual chasm in some cases.

Mr. M'Sickley's case, as I have already hinted, was no very uncommon one, except, perhaps, in the perseverance which characterised it. It was a case of sham-abraham. His doctor was the Mock Doctor. He was not the *Malade Imaginaire;* he was the invalid who had nothing the matter with him, and was conscious of the fact. His fever was a flam; his cough was a mere "hem!" to carry off the joke; his jaundice was but a colourable pretence; his gout was quite an affair of *gout;* and as for getting "higher than the rheumatism," he never reached it but in reputation.

When he stepped into the apartment, on the first morning of his arrival, it was with the air and action of a man who had reached, at that spot, who surveyed in that scene, his last home but one. The landlady ushered him in, and sighed with all her lodging-letting soul as she went out of the room. That sigh was heaved half on her own account and half perhaps on his. Her look of pity and vexation quite explained it.

"Poor gentleman," it said, "how provoking it is! He will soon want an apartment in the churchyard; it's hardly worth while taking the bill out of the window."

But no sooner had the silly, short-sighted, one-sided observer shut the door, with a confidence in the accuracy of her own calculations, that scorned the very idea of a second glance as requisite for its confirmation, that it became pretty evident that the bill in the window might be taken down at once, without a moment's

reflection, and that the notification "to let," had little chance of figuring again there very speedily. Mr. M'Sickley surveyed his gay and comfort-breathing quarters, with the air of a man who liked them marvellously, and meant to stop. His thoughts evidently turned on anything but a notice to quit, as his eyes moved rapidly about, and his head turned briskly on all sides, and his light, springing step crossed the floor in every direction, and his active body dropped into a chair in the easiest of attitudes, so as to enable him at leisure to take in the whole well-furnished scene, at one glance of the fullest satisfaction and approval. If that look did not say in the plainest inaudible language, that he had taken the rooms on a ninety-nine years lease, and was resolved to stay out his full term, it was wholly wanting in any kind of expression. He had evidently health to hold out *that* little time, at least.

True it was; the creeping, puling, feeble invalid, was, in reality, active as harlequin, sound as a roach, strong as the love of woman, and warranted "wind and limb." It was as though a dingy ragged cloak had dropped from him at the door, exhibiting a suit of spangles underneath. He had flung off all his ailments, as rascal-beggars do their wants, and sham-cripples their crutches, when out of sight and at home. It could hardly be more comical or striking to see the Starved Apothecary change into Fat Jack.

Instead of seeing him, as was reasonably to be expected, stretching languidly his aching bones before the fire, while his bed was being warmed, or barley-water prepared, he cut a little caper in the middle of the room, and began to unpack divers matters with a celerity only equalled in a pantomime. How he smacked his hands together now and then, with a loud vigour, and bustled about as though rioting in the enjoyment of that

"violent, robust, unfeeling health," which the tender Falkland held to be such an offence in his absent mistress.

All this bustle and vigour, however, was confined to his solitary hours. Fat Jack shrank again into the Starved Apothecary when company dropped in, or an appearance out of doors was called for. What a breakfast he would make! mustering first every delicacy which the housekeeper could provide from below to tempt his appetite, and adding to these, abundant stores of his own, collected privately at his favourite shops during his rounds of the day before! And then, presently, when the morning visiter came, to hope that he was no worse, how irrecoverably did he fall back upon the sick-list, sigh over his last spasms, enumerate the many well-founded suspicions he entertained as to the nature of his principal maladies, envy everybody who was well, and wonder whether he ever *should* get better, adding that he might, he might, nothing was impossible! A little walk perhaps would do him good! And out he would creep, in quest of a luncheon, or rather in quest of the first of his two daily dinners.

Mr. M'Sickley never received a chance-guest, and never invited one, morning or evening, but it would happen as a thing of course, that the whole world told him "he ought at that moment to be in bed;" and you may be sure, on the other hand, that whenever he went out, he "hardly knew how to put one foot before the other."

It is my province to observe facts, and not to speculate upon motives; else might I philosophise long, if not deeply, on this cherished habit, and endeavour to find out *why* he persevered, year after year, with such astonishing consistency, in feigning illness and acting the invalid! Was it to excite sympathy; to create an

interest in the minds of his acquaintances; to draw attention, at least, if he could not awaken any deeper feeling! If so, it was a plan that might succeed for a time, but could have no permanent success. The asthma that inflicted neither injury nor inconvenience, nobody cared for long; the half a liver that lasted for a lifetime, people ceased to pity; the ossified heart that regularly performed all its natural functions, produced but little softness in other hearts. And then how irksome was the constant assumption! How unfailing was the necessity of getting up piteous looks, putting on an attenuated air in opposition to an insidious tendency to corpulency, and limping on legs not much less than herculean. When Livy Primrose danced, the fine ladies from town, says the Vicar, "strove hard to be as easy." So would Mr. M'Sickley strive hard to be uneasy. All through life he was making the strongest efforts to seem weak.

When the end arrived, however, and the farce became tragedy; when sickness crept upon him indeed, and he grew visibly ill, and worse; and death was mounting up to his sanctum with sure steps, a stair higher every succeeding hour; then the invalid changed his note. He insisted on being perfectly well; he would not hear of illness, and for the first time in his life proclaimed himself to be thoroughly convalescent. Instead of a prescription, he demanded a bill of health; and only permitted the physician to come into his sight, as his eyes closed finally on the mockery and masquerading of life.

The fiction thus exhibited within view of death, has been the characteristic of many a long lifetime. In contradistinction to the prevailing infirmity of M'Sickley, may be cited the weakness of laying claim to strong health when debility is in possession of the citadel.

How many amongst the mask-wearers I have known have been victims to this delusion; seized with the ambition to be thought vigorous and hearty while conscious of the canker within! Judge them by their efforts at concealment, and it must be supposed that they confound bodily weakness with moral corruption. By mere strength of will, and in the sensitiveness of their pride, they suppress the show of pain or faintness, and suffer doubly by its working. The writhing limb, the nerveless hand, the face of anguish; of these there has often on a sudden ceased to be any visible trace, as though a cure had been effected by magic. What caused the instantaneous change? The door had opened to admit a friend! the eye of a stranger had fallen carelessly upon them! The malady is to be hidden from view as if it were a vice. At all hazards the heart must be brought to throb gaily, and the dark spot at the core must be gilded over with smiles. They would die at once rather than acknowledge by word or look a symptom of the secret decay. Thus, when the visiter has arrived, I have found the low moan, the feeble wail, the cry of bitter inward pain uttered in loneliness, changed into the light giddy laugh, or the humming of an air. But at what a cost!

One other spectacle I witnessed, which, although not of absolutely unfrequent occurrence, can never be seen without special wonder—without horror. These emotions, instead of being blunted by custom, must grow in acuteness with the repetition of the object thus awakening them: so shocking, so inexplicable is it.

The principal actors in this little domestic spectacle, were a father and mother, surrounded by a youthful romping family. They were themselves young in look, lively and amiable in manner, and seemed to require no such number of living ties to unite them as one

heart and one soul, for it was evident that without any of those irresistible and all-alluring influences to move them, they were tenderly devoted to each other. They were not affluent, but were blessed with everything that could be comprised in the meaning of comfort; and the enjoyment of every comfort was to them doubled by being so participated. If there was any one thing in which they were scarcely content to be on perfect equality, in which each felt it would be delightful to excel the other, it was in the display of affection for their children. Never were children more loved for their own sakes; and then they were loved as much again by each parent for the sake of the other. The cup of love and joy was filled to overflowing. They were a united, a happy family. They formed a group hardly to be met with out of a poem or a fable. They would have composed a delightful fireside-circle in a little cottage drawing-room somewhere in Arcadia.

What was it that, after a brief space, made me see in that doating, that devoted pair, a change such as the change upon the cheek of beauty, when death has frozen up the red spring, and the warm blood lights it no more? What was it that made me think the fair flesh had dropped from their brows, and two bony, eyeless visages were frowning in deeper ghastliness, from the effort to smile and look glad? What was it that rendered those two beings hateful in my eyes, and made me feel that, in the midst of life, the worm was already feeding in the foul places of the heart?

I said the family was a happy family; but the circle of happiness was incomplete—there was a gloomy, a horrible gap in it where Misery sat. I said that the father and mother were joined in parental sympathy, the purest, the most fervent, the most beautiful; vying with each other in cherishing an almost divine zeal, in

exercising an unspeakable tenderness for their offspring. I should have said—their offspring, with a solitary exception!

On the children so beloved, the parents' eyes never fell without sparkling with pleasure—the very soul looked out of them in pride and joy. But on *one* they never fell without darkening into hatred, or gleaming with ungratified malice. It was not cold indifference contrasting with the sunny affections lavished at the same instant on others—but it was aversion, malignity.

He was a pale boy, about seven or eight years old, sickly in look, and thinner than the rest. He was also prettier, though amazingly like them all, and blending in his expressive countenance the lineaments both of father and mother. There was no possibility of doubting his parentage; yet what dreadful cause was hourly furnished for disputing the melancholy, the monstrous truth!

For the others, from oldest to youngest, it was in the estimation of both parents very difficult to do enough; for him, the least that could be done in the way of kindness and gentle treatment, was a great deal too much. The only risk any juvenile member of the happy family ran of being checked in the most extravagant wish that could be formed, was when, by some singular chance, it took the direction of humanity to the little outcast. But such whims were very rarely entertained, for true to the lesson and the example of their parents, the happy family thought not of him as one belonging to it. He was amongst them, but not of them; and they could not pause in their play, or trouble their heads in quieter moments to consider what might be passing in his heart, for they never once thought whether he had one or not.

On the other hand, the pale-cheeked boy had not much clearer ideas on the subject of relationship; he was generally silent and submissive amongst the young revellers, and scarcely seemed to take the liberty of regarding them as brothers and sisters. If a bolder instinct sometimes awoke in his heart, and by making him feel that his blood was as theirs, that their mother was his own, forced upon him a sense of the strange cruelty of his lot in not being loved and cherished as they were, it never rose to his lips, for there was no one to whom he could complain. But a colour would come into his face, or a sickly shadow would fall over it, which, if observed, was attributed to bad temper, and a sharp scolding was the sure result.

If then the suppressed tears rushed hot and blindingly into his eyes, he was beaten and sent to bed in the dark; but darkness and solitude, the terrors of most children (so opposite was his fate to theirs), were rather a relief than an aggravation of his sorrows.

The incidents that illustrate his history may seem childish; they are only so because they relate to childhood. Never, for the disliked and disowned, was it permitted to mingle in the general play of the room, except on a dire necessity now and then, when others were in the sulks and refused. It was enough that he was allowed to look on. Indifference was a thing for which he might be thankful—it left him unfretted and quiet. This, with the influence of sorrow, made him a thoughtful boy, with intelligence as well as feelings beyond his years. But it was very gloomy. The heart must have something when most rejected to attach itself to, and the neglected boy's, a child's own heart as it was, would have played, not quite drearily, with the kitten—but it was forbidden: and, though ridiculous in sound, this prohibition had to him as grave an import

as many weighty troubles of the world, at which nobody ventures to laugh.

When the beloved ones were gathered round the bright fire, he was sure to be somewhere apart, away from the warm, pleasant circle, wherein there was no more room. When the fruit and sweetmeats were brought out, it happened that there was not enough to go quite round; there was always one orange short. When some childish sport at home or abroad was proposed, an awkward number was discovered, all could not go, and somebody must be left out. Worse than all—worse, if possible, a thousand and a thousand times—when the fond kisses and the smiling blessings went round on parting at night, and the happy children going to bed opened their sleepy eyes at the father's whispered promise of some treat in store, or the mother's straining rapturous caress; the sweet words, the golden smiles, the fervent kisses, though showered in such abundance, yet fell short! For one little forehead even a mother's lip had not a kiss left; for one little mouth, looking like a withered rosebud, there was no love-pressure; but instead, there was a cold unsmiling "good night," a quiet admonition to be good and to go to sleep instantly, with an injunction to the maid to report his behaviour in the morning, especially if he dared to keep awake, and disturb any of those sleepy darlings with his crying and sobbing.

What might be the dreams of that forlorn child, whether of cradling arms and warm caresses, of merry play with sisters and brothers, and childish toys and luxuries shared with them all, none knew or cared; but there was a star in the dark sky, a flower on the dreary waste he was doomed to traverse, which here and there momentarily cheered the despised and desolate little wanderer.

This relief came when a visiter arrived and appearances were to be kept up. He could not *always* be out of the way when the happy family, even to the youngest squalling member of it, were assembled; and on such occasions, before he could be quietly and decently taken down into the kitchen, his patient mournful face would attract notice, and expressions of pity and interest would compel the appearance of parental kindness to be put in action. Then the maternal lips would frame soft words of excuse for his sickly looks, and perhaps for his sullen temper; at which soft words, so new to his ears, his heart would heave as if to throw off all its weight of trouble at once, and "Poor boy!" murmured in a gentle voice, would melt him instantly to tears; when so far from being scolded, an apple, and not the stalest one either, would be good-naturedly brought him by his brother; who would instantly be rewarded for the generous spirit thus displayed, with the largest and rosiest in the plate.

How little did the careless, thoughtless guest, who had thus paid a chance visit there, dream that in doing so he was fulfilling a merciful end, and playing the part of a good angel! How little could he imagine what a music was in his voice, what a sunshine in his presence. Yet alas! the tender outcast always had to pay for this momentary admission into the paradise of humanity. The instinct of hatred took its old shape and natural tone when the door had closed on the intruder.

That gay, sunny, open room, seemed a home fit for the affections to assemble in, and hold festival for ever. But to him, the pale child of aversion, that elysium was a cavern cold and dark as midnight. There, for the other children, were father and mother, and ties of love binding them equally to present happiness; there, for him, were gaolers and spies; a prison, not a home; a

grave-like dwelling, but no grave; no companionship, yet no solitude. Worse than solitary, to a degree that words can scarcely paint, was the condition of the unloved boy.

He disappeared. Seldom and more seldom was he permitted to darken or to affright with his sad pallid face, the bright circle which parental partiality lived in; and at length, without a word spoken, his shadow was seen on the wall farthest from the fireside no more. He might have been sent alone to school, or put out to a hireling to board; or he might have wandered away, to find in fields and doorways a kinder home, and with strangers a more pitying nurture; or, better than all, he might have been caught up to Heaven in his innocence and sorrow, ere yet his blood had received any taint of its origin, or become partaker of the scorn, the bitterness, and the hatred, that so unnaturally poisoned the spring from which it flowed.

* * * *

It is difficult to set a limit to the revelations even of one solitary keyhole in London, when put to its confessions: so much variety of life must it have espied, such changes of character scanned, such whispered secrets caught. The windows fast and the door locked, still the airy sprite in the keyhole is left master of the room. Of the tenants I have watched, when no other eye was upon them, when nothing visible was present to influence their actions, and no imaginable motive existed for further concealment—when, therefore, they have been utterly and exclusively *themselves*—the majority beyond a doubt have been better worth knowing for their inside character, than the one they presented to the world; and had they but walked abroad as they might be seen at home, with all their native defects and weaknesses bare to the eye, they would have more

easily obtained the esteem of mankind. The mask, in two cases out of three, hid handsomer features than it imitated with such vulgar hypocrisy; and in the third case, the deception was so gross, or the difference between the affectation and the reality so slight, that the mask was scarcely worth the trouble of putting it on; and never atoned, by success in the issue, for the constant misery of wearing it.

What opposites have from year to year taken up their abode in this single room! Hither have come to reside, the youthful lonely student, and the venerable survivor of love, ambition, fame, hope, almost life; the hospitable entertainer, and the self-lover, who, nevertheless, denied food to his own lips; the proud, poor family, who would ever hide their wants from the reliever; and the rich scorner of his fellows, whose hand scattered blessings secretly. The marriage-party, flushed, glistening, and exulting, fresh from the altar, has here assembled; and here, too, have met the mourners, summoned to escort to his final lodging, a tenant unconscious of his removal.

As I have within these walls seen the decaying tenant, who staid till he was starved out, and flitted ghostlike in the night; and the thriving tenant who outgrew his small respectable abode and shot from it into western splendour; so has this apartment itself, in its finery and dilapidation, witnessed the two extremes of fortune. It has been heaped with comforts, hung round with elegance; usefulness and ornament have been combined in its attractions. Beauty has been born within it; infancy has gambolled upon its floor; here has happy old age said good night to the world; the wedding-feast, the bachelor-supper, lasting as the long night, have filled it to the ceiling with gaiety and joy; the laugh and the song have rung out, and the silent midnight prayer been sent up to Heaven; the

moan from the sick bed, the music of the birthday ball, and the quiet fireside converse of domestic life, together with sights and sounds speaking in infinite ways of humanity's humiliation and triumph, its delights and afflictions, have been echoed in rapid succession within its walls. And now, appropriated to vile uses, occupied by lumber, and tenanted by rats, it shakes in the winter-wind, and totters in anticipation of the doom to which it is sentenced, "to be pulled down," in furtherance of the metropolitan improvements.

JUST GOING OUT.

"GOING OUT" is sometimes a matter of exceeding difficulty; the phrase should rather be "getting out."

Morning is the time for the trial to which we allude. You have an appointment of very considerable importance, and it *must* be kept; or you have made up your mind, moved by the seductive serenity of the day, to take an easy stroll, and clear off an arrear of pleasant calls; you *must* go. The sunny look-out is exhilarating after a week's wind and rain, which has held you prisoner in your chambers, without so much as wafting or washing a single visitor to your door. You are tired of the house, and long for the fresh calm air, like a schoolboy for a whole holiday, or a usurer for cent. per cent. Everything is looking quite gay, like a Christmas fire to one who has just come out of a Christmas fog. The people go by with smiling faces, and in smart attire; you consequently take a little more pains than usual with your dress, rejecting this waistcoat as too quaker-

ish, and selecting your liveliest pair of gloves to match, when, just as your personal equipments are all but complete, not quite, "rat-tat-tat—tat-tat—tat!" there is a knock at the door.

Well, a knock at the door is no very astounding occurrence; but in this knock there is something startling, something ominous, something unwelcome. Nobody has knocked (nobody in the shape of a visitor) for some days, and it has an unusual sound. Had it suddenly broke in upon you while you were shaving, its effect might have been felt acutely; but you were just fixing the last shirt-stud, and a slight crumple is the sole consequence. You ring the bell hastily, rather anxious. "Tim," you cry softly, admonishing the sleepy little sinecurist that attends to the door; "Tim, there's a knock. Now, pray be cautious; I'm going out immediately; and can't see any stranger; you know whom I'm always at home to; don't let anybody in that you don't know well; mind!" You listen, with your hands uncomfortably stretched towards the back of your neck, in the suspended action of fastening your stock; and distinctly catch Tim's responsive "*Yes*, sir!" So, then, you *are* at home to somebody; and Tim immediately announces Mr. Bluff, your oldest and best friend, who is ever welcome, and to whom you are at home at all hours! Yes, only, only you are just now going out! But, never mind. Will he wait five minutes? You won't be longer; and Tim hurries off to him with the *Times*.

Two minutes more bring you almost to the completion of your toilet, and one arm has already half insinuated itself into the—ay, in the hurry it happens, of course, to be the wrong sleeve of the waistcoat, when alarm the second sounds; there's another knock. "Tim, mind!

pray mind! I'm going out. I can't see a soul—unless it's somebody that I *must* be at home to. You'll see who it is."

Tim returns with a card,—"Mr. Joseph Primly." "Primly, Primly! oh!—a—yes—that man, yes,—you didn't say I was at home?" Tim had *not* said you were at home, he had said that he didn't know whether you would be at home to him or not, and that he would go and see! "Stupid boy! Well, but this Primly—what can *he* want? I never spoke to him but once, I think—must see him, I suppose, as he's a stranger. Give him the *Chronicle*, and say, I'm coming down in one minute—just going out."

But before you *can* "come down," before you can quite coax on the last article of attire, the knocker is again raised, and rap the third resounds. Confusion thrice confounded! "Now, Tim, who *is* that? I can't be at home to anybody—you'll know whether I *can* be denied—I'm going out, Tim. Where are my gloves? Pray mind!" And, with an anxious face you await the third announcement. "Mr. Puggings Cribb." This *is* provoking. You can't be out to *him*. He is your quarrelsome friend, to whom you have just been reconciled; the irascible brother of your soul, who suspects all your motives, makes no allowances for you, and charges you with the perpetual ill-usage which he himself inflicts. Should you be denied to *him*, he will be sure to suspect you are at home; and should he find you really are, he will make the grand tour of the metropolis in three days, visiting everybody who knows you, and abusing you everywhere. "Yes, Tim, very right—I must be at home to him. But gracious goodness, what's the time? I'm just going out!"

Misfortunes never come single, and visitors seldom come in twos and threes. Before you are fairly at the

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bottom of the stairs, a fourth arrival is in all probability announced. What can you do? There was an excellent plan, first adopted by Sheridan, of getting rid of untimely visitors; but then his visitors were creditors. They came early, at seven in the morning, to prevent the possibility of being tricked with the usual answer, "Not at home," and of course they would not go away. One was shut up in one room, and another in another. By twelve o'clock in the day there was a vast accumulation; and at that hour, the master of the house would say, "James, are all the doors shut?" "All shut, sir." "Very well, then open the *street*-door softly:" and Sheridan walked quietly out between the double line of closed doors.

But this plan, though a thought of it darts across your mind, you cannot put in operation against friends. You therefore face them, grasping this one vigorously by the hand; then begging to be excused for a single moment, while, with a ceremonious bow, you just touch the finger-tips of another to whom you have scarcely the honour to be known; or nod familiarly to a third in the farther corner, who, by the way, is testifying to the intimacy of his friendship, by turning over your favourite set of prints with the brisk manner of an accountant tumbling over a heap of receipts and bills of parcels.

For each you have the same welcome, modified only by the tone and action that accompany it! "You are so happy that they arrived in time, for you were *just going out*, having a very important engagement;" and, curious to remark, each has the same reply to your hospitable intimation; but it is delightfully varied in voice and manner, "*I* shall not detain you; don't let *me* keep you a moment." But each does; one because he's an acquaintance only, and exacts formality; and

another because he's a devoted friend, and thinks it necessary to deprecate formality fifty times over, with "Nonsense, never mind *me;* come, no ceremony, I'm going." In fact, those detain you longest with whom you can use most freedom; and though you may bow out a formal visitor in twenty minutes, it takes you half an hour to push out a friendly one.

There are so many reasons why you must be at home to people; to a first, because he's a stranger; to a second, because he's a relation; to one, because he was married the other day, and you must wish him joy; to another, because his play failed last night, and you must condole with him; to this, because he doesn't come for money; to that, because he does, which is the oddest of all.

After a succession of pauses, hints and gentle embarrassments, three out of the four yield one by one to the pressure of appearances, and as you are evidently "going out," allow you to get out by taking their departure. Only one *will* linger to say a few words that amount to nonsense, on business that amounts to nothing, occupying professedly a minute, but in fact fifteen; when, just as he is taking his fifth start, and going in reality, crash comes the knocker once more; and that man of all your acquaintances, who never stops to ask whether you are at home or not, but stalks forward, in "at the portal," as the ghost of Hamlet senior stalks out of it, now dashes rather than drops in, delighted to catch you before you make your exit, and modestly claiming just half an hour of your idle morning; not an instant more.

"My dear fellow, I'm going out; a particular engagement; been kept in all the morning; will Friday do? Or shall I see you at the club?" No; nothing will do but listening; and your pertinacious and not-to-be-

denied detainer has just settled himself in the easiest chair, and commenced his story with, "Now, come sit down, and I 'll tell you all about. . . ." when the knocker once more summons the half-tired Tim, who forthwith enters with a proclamation in an under-tone, "Mr. Drone, sir, comes by appointment."

Luckily this occasions no difficulty. Mr. Drone was appointed to come at eleven, and it is now half-past two; he is therefore easily dismissed; besides, appointments, in these cases, are never troublesome; you can always be very sorry at a minute's notice, be particularly engaged very unexpectly, and appoint another hour and another day with perfect convenience. No; it is the dropper-in who blocks up your way; it is the idler who interrupts you in your expedition. The man of business who comes by appointment may generally be despatched without ceremony or delay!

You return again to your guest with a disconsolate air, though with a desperate determination to look attentive; but *sit* you will not; for while you keep poking the fire almost out, you seem to be preparing for your exit; and while you saunter listlessly about the room, you seem to be going; till at last you are brought to a stand-still, and compelled to submit to another bit of delay, by your visitor (who dined out, and stayed late somewhere the night before) asking for a glass of sherry, and some soda-water! You hurry to the bell with the happiest grace in the world; you are ashamed of not offering something of the sort before; you beg pardon—really; and, taking a seat with a smiling countenance and a heavy heart, bid a mournful adieu to every thought about your hat for the next quarter of an hour at least.

At last he does go, and you feel that, although the cream of the morning is skimmed off, it may still be

worth while to take quietly what remains; you may visit the scene of your broken engagement, though too late; you may enjoy a diminished stroll, although the flower of the day is cropped; and in this spirit, cane in hand, and hat actually on head, you advance to the street-door delivered from every visitor. It is opened; you stand in the very door-way; and then—then, in that moment of liberty, when you seemed free as air—you behold close to the step, and right in your path, another unconscionable acquaintance who never takes a denial, but always seizes a button instead! To retreat is impossible, to pass him unseen is equally so. Your hope of going out dies of old age and ill-usage within you; you can't *get* out. Your start of vexation and dismay is involuntary, and not to be concealed; but what cares he for your disappointment, so that he catches you! "Well, now I *am* lucky," he exclaims, "one moment more, and, presto! I had missed you for the morning! Come, 'going out,' is not 'gone,' anyhow; so I must just trouble you to turn back; I shan't keep you long!"

Of course, you explain, and protest, and are very civil and very sorry; but all this is idle. A visitor of the class to which the new-comer belongs knows very well the advantage he has over you. He smiles triumphantly, in a superb consciousness of your helpless and destitute condition. He is aware that you *can't* shut the door in his face; that if he persists in going in, under the pretence of a moment's interview, you *must* go in with him; that you are bound to be glad to see him, or stand exposed to the imputation of rudeness and inhospitality; that he may let you off if he likes, but that you cannot decently bolt without his consent; in short, that you are at his mercy; and this conviction teaches him to have no mercy upon you.

The result! who can ask it? You turn back, take off your hat, enter the nearest room, and without the slightest movement of hospitality beyond that, without the slightest hint to the remorseless being who has followed you in that there is such a thing as a chair in the room, you rest the fingers of one hand on the table, and with your hat held resolutely in the other, await your tyrant's pleasure! *He!*—powers of impudence in the garb of intimacy, where will ye find a limit? He, the most domesticated of animals, at once finds himself in his own house. He, when his foremost foot has once gained admittance into your sanctum, feels perfectly and entirely at home. He flings himself into a chair, and after a little parley about the weather (he acknowledges that it has been the loveliest morning of the season), and the glorious effects of exercise (he confesses that nothing on earth prevents him from taking his diurnal round in the bracing period of the day), launches boldly into a dissertation on some subject of immediate interest to himself, connected, perhaps, with municipal institutions, and the risk he incurs if he should decline to serve the office of sheriff: this suggests to him a recollection of the sheriff, his grandfather, whose history he relates at some length, followed by a narrative of his father's remarkable exploits in the whale-trade, and of his own life down to the period of his second marriage.

During all this time you have stood, too tired to interrupt—too polite, at least, to interrupt to any purpose—until at last, reminded by the shade creeping over the apartment that the beauty of the day is vanishing, that your meditated excursion is all but hopeless, and that you have been for the space of a brilliant summer's morning a prisoner in your own house, you savagely endeavour to bring him to the point. What

does he want with you? Nothing; nothing of course, except a little rest after the pleasant saunter he has had, and a little refreshment also; for when he looks at his watch (as you fondly suppose with the intention of going), he discovers that it happens to be his hour for "a snack." In short, this inveterate and uncompromising customer forcibly *has the tray up;* you haven't strength or courage to misunderstand his wishes, feeling rather faint yourself, sick of hope deferred, and inclined to potted beef. You place your hat and stick, both of which you have all this time held, upon the table; you draw off one glove; you fall-to with a famished fiend, who has walked twice round the Park in the bracing air; and another hour is gone.

So at length is he! And now, even now the promised stroll may be seized; the coast is clear; you feel "like a giant refreshed," and, after all, you cannot help owning, that it's a horribly vulgar thing to be seen strolling about before four o'clock in the day. You remember what the delicate philosopher said about the world not being properly aired before three; and bless your stars that what you have lost in health you have gained in reputation. On go your gloves once more, and—rap goes the knocker! It seems miraculous. All society is but one spiteful conspiracy against you. You forget that the same fine morning which quickened life in you kindled the fire of motion in others. No matter; the hour has at length arrived for "not at home to any human being. No, Tim, not to a living soul!" Unluckily, it is the fate of this most inflexible decree to be countermanded; there is one exception to the rule of not at home to anybody. "If the surveyor calls about the repairs," ay, and it *is* the surveyor. Well, the roof, and the cracked wall, must at once be looked to; how-

ever, that will not occupy ten minutes, and to the needful business you heroically devote yourself. Half an hour flies, and then you are finally released; but, unhappily, just at that moment the man brings home your two new coats; you must glance at one, for you may wear it at dinner. And then crawls up to the door that dilatory fellow whose tidings about the books you have been waiting for—yes, at least for a fortnight; and, while discussing with him a particular achievement in binding on which you have set your heart, a letter arrives—a letter marked "important and immediate," though of no earthly consequence, and anything but pressing; still it must be answered, and accordingly the hat is once more taken off, the gloves are petulantly flung down, the cane is tossed anywhere, and . . . .

Rat-tat-tat, &c. resound once more through the rooms; and following quick as though he were the visible echo of a single rap, Cool Sam comes in. He had found Tim at the open door chatting with the messenger in waiting. Cool Sam! Now own frankly that there is small chance of your escape on this side the dinner-hour: nay, there is not at all. An engagement you may have, a determination you may have formed; but do you for a single instant seriously expect to fulfil the one, or hold to the other? Then you are a fool. We prophesy at once, that *you won't get out to-day*. A man may be always going and going, and yet never be gone. You are Sam's till dinner-time, you are Sam's then, and you are Sam's afterwards. Till bed-time (and he himself fixes that hour) you are his. Mark our words if you are not. True, you tell him you have to write a letter. "Write away, boy," he responds, "I can wait." You warn him that the moment this feat is accomplished, you must sally forth on urgent and

especial business. "All right," he rejoins, "I'll jump into a cab with you, and we 'll come back and dine. I came on purpose."

A glance tells you, if your ears did not, that your guest has settled the thing. His looks, his tone, his bearing, are in exquisite agreement; for a quiet conviction, that what *he* has made up his mind to *must* take place, there never was anything like it. You write a word or two, and in agitation blot; another line, and then an erasure again. *Does* he mean to *stop!* Your perplexity increases. No, this smudge of a note will never do; you take another sheet and recommence your epistle. "Take your time, boy, take your time; we shan't dine till seven I suppose." Your eye wanders for an instant, and you discover that there is but *one* hat in the room, and that the one is your own. His is hanging up with his umbrella; he had disposed of both, like a man who means to stay, before he entered the apartment.

To struggle with Cool Sam is in vain, to attempt it absurd. To cry like the starling, "I can't get out," doesn't open the door of your cage. Instead of complaining, you soon feel grateful to him for his great consideration in allowing you to finish that letter. Instead of biting your lips through and through, you laugh over your good luck in being permitted to complete the work he had interrupted. But beyond that you have no will of your own. *Out!* You might as well attempt to go out without your shadow. You may take a few turns at sunset, attended by your Mephistophiles; but before you go you must issue orders for what he calls "a light dinner with a few extras" at seven. You may mourn your day lost, if you will, but you must lose your evening nevertheless; and when once more alone at past midnight, you drop off to sleep,

making to yourself many delicious vows of reform; the foremost of which is, that you will be up in good time in the morning, AND GET OUT.

MY CHRISTMAS DINNER!

IT was on the twentieth of December last that I received an invitation from my friend Mr. Phiggins, to dine with him, in Mark-lane, on Christmas-day. I had several reasons for declining this proposition. The first was, that Mr. P. makes it a rule, at all these festivals, to empty the entire contents of his counting-house into his little dining-parlour; and you consequently sit down to dinner with six white-waistcoated clerks, let loose upon a turkey. The second was, that I am not sufficiently well-read in cotton and sugar, to enter with any spirit into the subject of conversation. The third was, and is, that I never drink Cape wine. But by far the most prevailing reason remains to be told. I had been anticipating for some days, and was hourly in the hope of receiving, an invitation to spend my Christmas-day in a most irresistible quarter. I was expecting, indeed, the felicity of eating plum-pudding with an angel; and, on the strength of my imaginary engagement, I returned a polite note to Mr. P., reducing him to the necessity of advertising for another candidate for Cape and turkey.

The twenty-first came. Another invitation, to dine with a regiment of roast-beef eaters at Clapham. I declined this also, for the above reason, and for one other, *viz.* that, on dining there ten Christmas-days ago, it was discovered, on sitting down, that one little accompaniment of the roast beef had been entirely overlooked.

Would it be believed? but I will not stay to mystify; I merely mention the fact. They had forgotten the horse-radish!

The next day arrived, and with it a neat epistle, sealed with violet-coloured wax, from Upper Brook-street. "Dine with the ladies, at home on Christmas-day." Very tempting, it is true; but not exactly the letter I was longing for. I began, however, to debate within myself upon the policy of securing this bird in the hand, instead of waiting for the two that were still hopping about the bush, when the consultation was suddenly brought to a close, by a prophetic view of the portfolio of drawings fresh from boarding-school; moths and roses on embossed paper;—to say nothing of the album, in which I stood engaged to write an elegy on a Java sparrow, that had been a favourite in the family for three days. I rung for gilt-edged, pleaded a world of polite regret, and again declined.

The twenty-third dawned; time was getting on rather rapidly; but no card came. I began to despair of any more invitations, and to repent of my refusals. Breakfast was hardly over, however, when the servant brought up, not a letter, but an aunt and a brace of cousins from Bayswater. They would listen to no excuse; consanguinity required me, and Christmas was not my own. Now my cousins keep no albums; they are really as pretty as cousins can be; and when violent hands, with white kid gloves, are laid on one, it is sometimes difficult to effect an escape with becoming elegance. I could not, however, give up my darling hope of a pleasanter prospect. They fought with me in fifty engagements, that I pretended to have made. I showed them the Court Guide, with ten names obliterated; being those of persons who had *not* asked me to mince-meat and mistletoe; and I ultimately gained

my cause by quartering the remains of an infectious fever on the sensitive fears of my aunt, and by dividing a rheumatism and a sprained ankle between my sympathetic cousins.

As soon as they were gone I walked out, sauntering involuntarily in the direction of the only house in which I felt I could spend a "happy" Christmas. As I approached, a porter brought a large hamper to the door. "A present from the country," thought I; "yes, they *do* dine at home; they must ask me; they know that I am in town." Immediately afterwards a servant issued with a letter: he took the nearest way to my lodgings, and I hurried back by another street to receive the so-much-wished-for invitation. I was in a state of delirious delight.

I arrived, but there was no letter. I sate down to wait, in a spirit of calmer enjoyment than I had experienced for some days; and in less than half an hour a note was brought to me. At length the desired dispatch had come: it seemed written on the leaf of a lily, with a pen dipped in dew. I opened it, and had nearly fainted with disappointment. It was from a stock-broker, who begins an anecdote of Mr. Rothschild before dinner, and finishes it with the fourth bottle; and who makes his eight children stay up to supper and snap-dragon. In Macadamizing a stray stone in one of his periodical puddings, I once lost a tooth, and with it an heiress of some reputation. I wrote a most irritable apology, and dispatched my warmest regards in a whirlwind.

December the twenty-fourth; I began to count the hours, and uttered many poetical things about the wings of Time. Alack! no letter came; yes, I received a note from a distinguished dramatist, requesting the honour, &c. But I was too cunning for this, and prac-

tised wisdom for once. I happened to reflect that this pantomime was to make its appearance on the night after, and that his object was to perpetrate the whole programme upon me. Regret that I could not have the pleasure of meeting Mr. Paulo, and the rest of the *literati* to be then and there assembled, was of course immediately expressed.

My mind became restless and agitated. I felt, amidst all these invitations, cruelly neglected. They served, indeed, but to increase my uneasiness, as they opened prospects of happiness in which I could take no share. They discovered a most tempting desert, composed of forbidden fruit. I took down *Childe Harold,* and read myself into a sublime contempt of mankind. I began to perceive that merriment is only malice in disguise, and that the chief cardinal virtue is misanthropy.

I sate "nursing my wrath" till it scorched me; when the arrival of another epistle suddenly charmed me from this state of delicious melancholy and delightful endurance of wrong. I sickened as I surveyed, and trembled as I opened it. It was dated from ——, but no matter; it was not *the* letter. In such a frenzy as mine, raging to behold the object of my adoration condescended, not to *eat* a custard, but to render it invisible; to be invited perhaps to a tart fabricated by her own ethereal fingers;—with such possibilities before me, how could I think of joining a "friendly party," where I should inevitably sit next to a deaf lady, who had been, when a little girl, patted on the head by Wilkes, or my Lord North, she could not recollect which, had taken tea with the author of *Junius,* but had forgotten his name; and who once asked me "whether Mr. Munden's monument was in Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's?" I seized a pen, and presented my com-

pliments. I hesitated, for the peril and precariousness of my situation flashed on my mind; but hope had still left me a straw to catch at, and I at length succeeded in resisting this late and terrible temptation.

After the first burst of excitement I sunk into still deeper despondency. My spirit became a prey to anxiety and remorse. I could not eat; dinner was removed with unlifted covers. I went out. The world seemed to have acquired a new face; nothing was to be seen but raisins and rounds of beef. I wandered about like Lear; I had given up all! I felt myself grated against the world like a nutmeg. It grew dark; I sustained a still gloomier shock. Every chance seemed to have expired, and everybody seemed to have a delightful engagement for the next day. I alone was disengaged; I felt like the Last Man! To-morrow appeared to have already commenced its career; mankind had anticipated the future; "and coming mince-pies cast their shadows before."

In this state of desolation and dismay I called—I could not help it—at the house to which I had so fondly anticipated an invitation and a welcome. My protest must here however be recorded, that though I called in the hope of being asked, it was my fixed determination not to avail myself of so protracted a piece of politeness. No: my triumph would have been to have annihilated them with an engagement made in September, payable three months after date. With these feelings I gave an agitated knock—they were stoning the plums, and did not immediately attend. I rung—how unlike a dinner-bell it sounded! A girl at length made her appearance, and, with a mouthful of citron, informed me that the family had gone to spend their Christmas-eve in Portland-place. I rushed down the steps, I hardly knew whither. My first impulse was to go to some wharf

and inquire what vessels were starting for America. But it was a cold night; I went home and threw myself on my miserable couch. In other words, I went to bed.

I dosed and dreamed away the hours till daybreak. Sometimes I fancied myself seated in a roaring circle, roasting chestnuts at a blazing log; at others, that I had fallen into the Serpentine while skating, and that the Humane Society were piling me upon a Pelion, or rather a Vesuvius of blankets. I awoke a little refreshed. Alas! it was the twenty-fifth of the month, it was Christmas-day! Let the reader, if he possess the imagination of Milton, conceive my sensations.

I swallowed an atom of dry toast; nothing could calm the fever of my soul. I stirred the fire and read Zimmerman alternately. Even reason, the last remedy one has recourse to in such cases, came at length to my relief: I argued myself into a philosophic fit. But, unluckily, just as the Lethean tide within me was at its height, my landlady broke in upon my lethargy, and chased away by a single word all the little sprites and pleasures that were acting as my physicians, and prescribing balm for my wounds. She paid me the usual compliments, and then, "Do you dine at home to-day, Sir?" abruptly inquired she. Here was a question. No Spanish inquisitor ever inflicted such complete dismay in so short a sentence. Had she given me a Sphinx to expound, a Gordian tangle to untwist; had she set me a lesson in algebra, or asked me the way to Brobdignag; had she desired me to show her the North Pole, or the meaning of a melodrama; any or all of these I might have accomplished. But to request me to define my dinner; to inquire into its latitude; to compel me to fathom that sea of appetite which I now felt rushing through my frame; to ask me

to dive into futurity, and become the prophet of pies and preserves! My heart died within me at the impossibility of a reply.

She had repeated the question before I could collect my senses around me. Then, for the first time, it occurred to me that, in the event of my having no engagement abroad, my landlady meant to invite me! "There will at least be the two daughters," I whispered to myself; "and after all, Lucy Matthews is a charming girl, and touches the harp divinely. She has a very small pretty hand, I recollect; only her fingers are so punctured by the needle, and I rather think she bites her nails. No, I will not even now give up my hope. It was yesterday but a straw, to-day it is but the thistle-down; but I will cling to it to the last moment. There are still four hours left; they will not dine till six. One desperate struggle, and the peril is past; let me not be seduced by this last golden apple, and I may yet win my race." The struggle was made, "I should not dine at home." This was the only phrase left me; for I could not say that "I should dine out." Alas! that an event should be at the same time so doubtful and so desirable. I only begged that if any letter arrived, it might be brought to me immediately.

The last plank, the last splinter, had now given way beneath me. I was floating about with no hope but the chance of something almost impossible. They had "left me alone," not with my glory, but with an appetite that resembled an avalanche seeking whom it might devour. I had passed one dinnerless day, and the half of another; yet the promised land was as far from sight as ever. I recounted the chances I had missed. The dinners I might have enjoyed, passed in a dioramic view before my eyes. Mr. Phiggins and his six clerks; the Clapham beef-eaters; the charms of Upper Brook-

street; my pretty cousins, and the pantomime writer; the stock-broker, whose stories one forgets, and the elderly lady who forgets her stories; they all marched by me, a procession of apparitions. Even my landlady's invitation, though unborn, was not forgotten in summing up my sacrifices. And for what?

Four o'clock. Hope was perfectly ridiculous. I had been walking upon the hair-bridge over a gulf, and could not get into Elysium after all. I had been catching moonbeams, and running after notes of music. Despair was my only convenient refuge; no chance remained, unless something should drop from the clouds. In this last particular I was not disappointed; for on looking up I perceived a heavy shower of snow. Yet I was obliged to venture forth; for being supposed to dine out, I could not of course remain at home. Where to go I knew not: I was like my first father, "the world was all before me." I flung my cloak round me, and hurried forth with the feelings of a bandit longing for a stiletto. At the foot of the stairs, I staggered against two or three smiling rascals, priding themselves upon their punctuality. They had just arrived, to make the tour of Turkey. How I hated them! As I rushed by the parlour, a single glance disclosed to me a blazing fire, with Lucy and several lovely creatures in a semicircle. Fancy, too, gave me a glimpse of a sprig of mistletoe; I vanished from the house, like a spectre at day-break.

How long I wandered about is doubtful. At last I happened to look through a kitchen-window, with an area in front, and saw a villain with a fork in his hand, throwing himself back in his chair choked with ecstacy. Another was feasting with a graver air; he seemed to be swallowing a bit of Paradise, and criticising its flavour. This was too much for mortality; my appe-

tite fastened upon me like an alligator. I darted from the spot; and only a few yards farther, discerned a house, with rather an elegant exterior, and with some ham in the window that looked perfectly sublime. There was no time for consideration; to hesitate was to perish. I entered: it was indeed "a banquet-hall deserted." The very waiters had gone home to their friends. There, however, I found a fire; and there, to sum up all my folly and felicity in a single word, I DINED!

THE FLOWER-STEALERS.

A FACT.

With gentle hand,
Touch, for there is a spirit in the woods.

WORDSWORTH.

FOLLOWING the gardener through some of the loveliest portions of his Grace's magnificent domain, we all entered the conservatory.

The heat was oppressive. As we passed out of the fresh air, although the light breeze that crept about had just before appeared to serve no other purpose than that of blowing the sunshine into our eyes, the atmospheric change was stiflingly perceptible. The uneasy sensation, however, was but momentary; for as soon as the rapid glance, startled and delighted, had taken in the full display of flower and leaf, every sense seemed to share the intoxication of the eye, and the rapt soul fed on a profusion of beauty.

There was the blush of the drooping-flowered fuchsia; the delicacy of the abundant azalea; the orchidea whose flowers are living butterflies, beautiful but motionless; the vivid yet soothing scarlet of the cactus; the more

than alabaster of the camellia; the single stem of the rare lileolum lanceatum; there moreover were rich varieties of ericas, each eclipsing the other in luxuriance and beauty; and countless rarities with long names and short lives, green and golden wonders, colours that made the rainbow tame, and yet were often less exquisitely lovely than the symmetry of their several parts, the strength and lightness of the stems whence they drew being, and the harmony of the general combination.

The collection which was so striking and superb in its general effect, was more enchanting in detail. We paused at every step; admiring in plants familiar to us, a perfection and maturity unknown to them elsewhere; and in others, which were newer to our eyes, a charm surpassing all. We became converts to the melancholy doctrine, that the loveliest things are after all the rarest. But there was no touch of melancholy in the feeling then. That keen perception of the beautiful was all joy.

The ladies, who were my companions, were gladdened beyond telling. Amongst their various tastes there was one—it was rather a passion—that made the whole five hearts beat as with a single pulse. One love united them all; gave the same lustre of earnestness and admiration to their eyes, the same flush of warmth and pleasure to their cheeks: it was the Love of Flowers!

'Mrs. Gardiner,' had she been present, would have hugged them every one. I could have done it myself.

On they passed, slowly and inquiringly, but with quick sight and leaping hearts; their ribands, their draperies, all but the cheeks before mentioned, and the lips that might be yet more lovingly alluded to, made pale by the hues which surrounded us.

The plants, in their utmost rarity and bloom, still seemed but worthy—only worthy—of their human ad-

mirers. My soul, moved by the association presented to it, spake unto the blossoms in their many dyes, in their various qualities of brilliancy and meekness, and said:

"Oh, Flowers! your delicacy is not unmatched, while spirits, like the spirits of these fair beings, move amongst ye! And if ye are emblems of innocence, here, behold, is that innocence itself, arrayed like you in beauty!"

And I thought I would send the sentiment thus expressed, as a pleasing novelty, to some tenderly conducted magazine.

While I was gently musing upon the elevating, the purifying influence which the love of floriculture exercises even over coarser minds, and exulting in its exquisite workings upon the refined natures of my fair companions, I was stopped by a general exclamation of pleasure, suddenly elicited by the view of an unrivalled cluster of blossoms crowning many others, which rose or fell in infinite variety and with astonishing profusion. Why record the name of this plant? even its colour, or the figure of its countless leaves?

As we stopped, the gardener who had left us to gather bouquets for the party, re-entered, and presenting each of us with some choice flowers, said,

"I would cut you some of these beautiful clusters, ladies" (turning to the *one* plant), "but they would die directly in the open air—*you would not keep them ten minutes.*"

I felt half angry with the goodnature of our attendant. Cut them! *Those!* The precious perishables! To doom their short lives to a yet shorter date; to destroy their consummate symmetry; seize their peerless beauty, and waste it on the desert air! The idea of it awoke horror: It seemed impiety. It was like shooting

nightingales while in full song, or clipping the wings of humming-birds.

When he again quitted the conservatory, we pursued our tour of admiration, found numberless beauties we had missed, and presently returning, stood before the same specimen of floricultural perfection. And here the pen seems actually to burn between my fingers; my very fingers as they guide it blush.

Whether it was that the idea of cuttings from its rich stem had been implanted in the minds of my innocent and gentle companions by him who had given breath to it, or whether that spark of doubtful and conditional promise had fallen upon an inflammable train of wishes already existing in the mind, I know not; but their desires now appeared all to take the same direction; they grew ungovernable; they began to find expression, not in coveting looks alone, but in broken words and half-repressed exclamations. United in one guileless and enthusiastic love before, they seemed united still; but it was in one wish—one fear—not a fear of sacrilege, but of detection.

Would that Mrs. Gardiner had been there!

Yes, a fear of humiliation and exposure!—not of profanation and theft, in plucking a forbidden treasure of unexampled delicacy, and trampling it momentarily in the dust.

Before we passed over the threshold of that conservatory, every one of the five ladies had snatched a slip—

As I stepped into the fresh air, the breeze was not in the least degree cooler to my cheek than the atmosphere within; but in one instant I felt my heart plunged into a cold-bath.

That thing of beauty is a pang for ever.

* * * * *

Oh! Ancient Mariner who shot the Albatross! young

hearts that never throbbed on the far sea; spirits tender and weak, that would tremble even in the calm, and expire in the first breath of tempest; may yet do as cruel and terrible things, calling them all the while the deeds of rapturous love!

Oh Bardolph! who, having stolen the lady's lute-case, carried it eleven miles and sold it for three-halfpence, a most judicious thief wert thou, compared with purloiners, whose fragrant prizes wither in the common air, and yield them nothing.

Oh, lady, whom the great prose-teacher of memorable lessons in our complex and erring humanity, has immortalised without naming, you who, prompted by your religious love, stole Tillotson's Sermons from your friend, look earthward wherever you are, and see what love of flowers will prompt its votaries to do!

Under what sacred robes do we play our tricks! What holy names we bestow upon our covetous desires! What theft and spoliation we commit in the temple of the purest affection, amidst the symbols and evidences of innocence! Let no one ever talk of the "sentiment of flowers," who has not within him the hallowed principle, which ever guards him from the temptation of stealing even the meanest, violating Truth at her very altar, and uprooting the sheltering plant of confidence.

THE CHEMIST'S FIRST MURDER.

. . . . "I KNOW not how to begin the story," said the chemist, sighing heavily, while a slight spasm passed over his sorrowful face; "but when I used to poison people—"

"I can't accept that for a beginning," said I, inter-

rupting him. "Your conscience is over-nice, too sensitive and suspicious by half. Begin, in plain, honest English, 'When I was a chemist—'"

"It means the same thing," he answered. "The people in Albania, you know, always commence their stories with 'When I was a thief.'"

"So might some of us in England, who belong to what Sydney Smith calls the undetected classes of society; but you never heard a lawyer, when settled in his easy-chair, opening a narrative of the past with 'When I used to ruin half the parish'; nor do retired members of parliament, referring to past periods of legislation, preface their anecdotes of patriotism with 'When I practised bribery through thick and thin'."

"You speak," returned the chemist, sadly, "of people wiser than I am; people who can very well bear their own reproaches, so long as they can contrive to escape the world's. But enough of this. When I was a pois—. Well, then, when I was a chemist—"

"That's it—now go on."

. . . . At that time London had the Byron fever. But London contains many Londons, and they all had it with greater or less virulence. Thinking and thoughtless London; those who read much, and those who never read anything; the large-souled, the little-souled, and the no-souled, every one took the infection. It became quite the fashion, all of a sudden, to *feel*. Iron nerves relaxed, hearts of stone broke to pieces inwardly. There might be some who did not know what to think, yet these could of course talk; and there might be a few who, from long-established habits, found it quite impossible to get fast hold of a feeling, still they could shed tears.

Society became a sponge, soaking up those briny

showers of the muse, which only descended faster and faster, "and the big rain came dancing to the earth." Young men wept until their shirt-collars fell down starchless and saturated; young ladies, sitting on sofas, were floated out of the drawing-room window into the centre of Grosvenor-square; and I verily believe that if those cantos (but they were not yet in existence) which found some little difficulty in making their way into families, *could* have got into a needle's eye, they would have extracted a tear from it.

For the ladies, however, I do not answer positively; I can only vouch for the condition of my youthful brethren. You might have seen them with the new volume—bought, bought, mind—not borrowed; with the volume itself, not an American broadsheet that had pirated its precious contents; with a wet copy of the first edition, not a smuggled, sneaking, cheating, French version; with this volume of world-enchanting wonders tenderly grasped, you might have seen them hurrying along the street, stopping every now and then, and just opening it so as to peep at the mighty line within; then hastening on a little way, repeating the half-dozen "words that breathe" just read, until they were breathless; then, burning with curiosity for the passionate revelation, they would glide down a gateway, or shelter themselves at a shop-door, to dive a little further into the sea of thought, bringing up a pearl at every dip.

The sensation with which these young people first read—

Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child?

constituted an epoch in their lives. It did in mine. That third canto was my first rock ahead. I never knew one bottle from another afterwards. All drugs became alike, merged into *a* drug. I hated Apollo in his connection with physic, but I worshipped him in his

poetical divinity. I did not aspire to write verse; my appreciation of it was too enthusiastic, exalted, and intense; to read it, to understand it, to recite it silently, accompanying myself on the pestle and mortar, was sufficient ecstacy.

By degrees, rather rapid, the pestle and mortar accompaniment was omitted. I abjured all practical superintendence of the affairs of "the shop." I regarded with a scorn that bordered on disgust the people who visited it, with prescriptions testifying to their miserable and innately vulgar concern for the welfare of their bodies; I longed to read them a favourite passage or two, prescriptive of mental medicine. A sudden burst—

> With thee, my bark, I'll swiftly go,

startled the matter-of-fact applicant for an ounce of that strengthening medicine; and an involuntary application of the ever-recurring line,

> Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child?

would elicit from the simple girl who came for hartshorn, the explanation, that in general it was, "only mother's is swelled."

Disgust naturally came in time, and with it, as a matter of course, total inattention to "business." Add to this the fact, that I was possessed, in the person of an apprentice, of one of those things called "treasures," in short, a precocious genius, and it will readily be understood that a few mistakes in the mixing of medicines would occur every now and then.

"Physicians' prescriptions carefully prepared," inscribed in gold letters upon purple glass, neatly framed, figured in the window; and no doubt care was taken to prepare as many as might be presented; but the lad

had unhappily an experimental turn, and he was always for throwing perfumes upon Dr. Somebody's violets.

When he had no particular ground for guessing how an improvement might be effected, he would hazard an alteration for the sake of change, just to keep his hand in; and the bottle to the extreme right, or the drawer to the extreme left, or the jar next to him, had an equal chance in these cases of being resorted to. The effect was sometimes to heighten, to an alarming degree, some peculiar influence delicately infused by the learned prescriber, and sometimes to neutralise altogether the essential principle of the prescription.

"Men have died from time to time," says the poet, "and worms have eaten them, but not for love." Can this be said of physic?

At that time, however, I heard of no disaster. Men died doubtless, and worms dined. This was perfectly natural. At the worst, if any mysterious case obtruded itself, and the death of a patient followed immediately upon his taking a new lease of life from the verdict of a physician, there was always the convenient broken heart to fall back upon. Broken hearts were then as plentiful as blackberries.

"And some," says Manfred, pleasantly enumerating the various disagreeables whereof people perish,

> And some of withered or of broken hearts,
> For this last is a malady that slays
> More than are numbered in the lists of fate.

We always used to set down any little inadvertence to the inevitable malady, the broken heart. A wrong medicine perhaps produced a very embarrassing and equivocal turn in the disease, which came after a little while to look like a totally different complaint; and having an odd appearance with it, it was clearly a case of broken heart. . . . . .

[The chemist groaned heavily, and appeared to labour under an attack of conscience.]

It was all very well while the mischiefs that arose, either from my own deliberate neglect, or the apprentice's speculative genius, were uncertain and obscure; so long as the body of the victim was not laid right against the shop-door. But alas! a case occurred one afternoon—

[The speaker stopped at the very threshold of his confession, but after swallowing a glass of water, his faintness vanished.]

I was in the little apology for a parlour behind, reading the fourth canto, when the treasure of an apprentice quitting his place at the counter came to consult me upon something doubtful, either of quantity or ingredient, in a prescription just presented for preparation. I was in the heart of an enchanting, a soul-enchaining stanza. I had got to the line—

> Though I be ashes, a far hour shall wreak
> The deep prophetic fulness of this verse—

when in he broke with an impertinent, an intolerable inquiry. I answered, in the flush of my excitement, anything; I named an ingredient or two for the compound off-hand, and bid him vanish, resuming the passage, and completing the stanza—

> And pile on human heads the mountain of my curse.

All medicines, however mixed, seemed weak to that idea. Prussic acid could not, so it appeared to me, have kept pace with such poetry. Its effect upon my mind as I read was, to make the most dangerous and deadly poisons appear perfectly contemptible, and not worth the care and trouble of weighing them out in mere half-ounces!

But suddenly, after a little time, an idea stole darkly

across my mind of drugs compounded, and pills delivered; of an intrusion on the part of the young genius of the shop, an order given by myself in articulate and peremptory words, and medicines consequently mixed up!

But what a medicine was amongst them, and in what a quantity!

Oh, no, the thought was a frightful one to be sure, but it was only momentary! A horrible suspicion, an agonising fear, an appalling flash; but it was too acute, too withering to last, and it was over. I sought again the fascinating spell of the poem, "And I have loved thee, ocean!" "Oh! Rome, my country!" "There was a sound of revelry by night."

How! the spell failing! Passage after passage, that had never failed me before! Yes, it was in vain to attempt to read; in vain to affect the abstracted, the meditative mood. The dark, strong, subtle thought would thrust itself into my brain, and hold down every idea that struggled to ascend to that "more removed ground."

A sudden dash into the opposite extreme is sometimes effective in these cases; so I got up, walked about, and whistled considerably out of tune. But the horrid idea took a tighter and more burning hold, and seemed to twist itself round my brain like a red-hot wire, as if it would never loosen again on the cool side of madness! I ceased whistling and walking about, flung myself into a chair, seized the magic volume, and opened it at the irresistible page—

Is thy face like thy mother's——?

Mine, as I glanced up at the little glass opposite, was like a maniac's. The likeness of the dreadful thought was there; the form of the scowling and distorted

suspicion was over it; and it seemed to have remoulded all my features, and my very eyes could not recognise their own reflection in the mirror.

I dashed down the book, that broken wand of the enchanter, and rushed forward to learn the worst; which was precisely what I *did* learn!

[Here the chemist swallowed another glass of water, and applied his handkerchief to his forehead.]

The customer was gone; so was the prescription; so were the pills. I elicited from my treasure of a lad a *verbatim* report of the instructions I had given, the medicine I had named, the quantity ordered; and I stood with the feeling of one impaled, just for a minute longer, to learn distinctly from his lips the deplorable but indubitable fact, that he had scrupulously and religiously observed my diabolical instructions. It was enough. By the force of my sensations which I had hitherto struggled to suppress, I seemed to be literally shot out of the shop; and in thirty seconds was a considerable distance from the house, flying up the crowded thoroughfare insensible of impediments, and yet finding leisure to scrutinise every passenger's face, utterly unconscious that I had never beheld the features of the luckless being whom I sought.

Then back again I darted in the opposite direction, seeking the unknown, as if it were my own soul that had slipped from me, and inwardly offering as I went, worlds per minute, for the discovery of the lost man. All this time I was equally unmindful of the circumstance that he had been gone an hour, east, west, north, or south, I knew not, any more than I should have known his visage had I beheld it before me.

Frantic still, but breathless and exhausted, I returned. The tale was repeated word for word; various bottles, their labels and contents, were anxiously in-

spected again and again, as though there were some remote possibility of a latent chance of mistake. There could be none; there *was* none. The stranger had most certainly gone away, bearing with him a box of pills, whereof, by a most pitiless direction inscribed upon the lid, he was to take two daily.

"Heaven!" I exclaimed, "be merciful to the Doomed one; he has but eight-and-forty-hours to live! Four of those pills would carry destruction, certain as gun-shot, to the heart of an emperor, or the pulses of a serf. Neither Turk, Jew, infidel, nor heretic, could escape."

"That's as sure as death," remarked my young treasure.

And as I turned to look upon the speaker, I thought I saw in his eyes the gloomy light of the condemned cell, and his voice had a harsh and grating sound, like the opening of the debtor's door at the Old Bailey.

That night I wandered about the Park, shunning everybody, yet peering as far as my fears allowed me into every face, expecting to see "poison" written there. What happiness past expression to have encountered the stranger; now, now before bed-time! What an unspeakable relief to conscience, to be able to trace him out, to warn him of his peril, and avert his else inevitable fate! But this was hopeless! My thoughts ranged over all the consequences; the speedy death, the searching inquiry, the prompt detection.

I well knew, to be sure, all the time, that the world is amazingly indulgent and charitable on all these occasions; I was aware that the public verdict universally agreed to in these cases of mistake, is that nobody on earth is to blame, and that the individual whose inadvertence proved fatal is a person well known and greatly esteemed for his peculiar carefulness.

I was conscious that the chemist, so far from being

deemed culpable, would most likely obtain, through the medium of the shocking occurrence, a character for caution that he never possessed before.

But this to me afforded no consolation, no hope of a respite from the pangs of remorse, and the sentence of the law. The tramp of horses and the rolling of wheels in the distance, sounded like the rattling of fetters. The night grew dark; the rays of the moon looked no brighter than the grating of a dungeon; and at length, as a sable cloud hung over the white vapour round it, there appeared to my affrighted eyes the image of a black cap upon the wig of justice.

Next day, I gathered courage enough to take an eminent physician's opinion as to the effects of such a medicine; two pills at a time until the box was empty! His judgment was clear and final. The patient could not live to take a tithe of them.

I went to another distinguished authority with my supposititious case. He was equally distinct and undoubting. Four of them would have carried off Methuselah in the prime of life!

I returned home to dinner. Dinner! The cloth resembled a large weekly newspaper, with wood engravings, faithfully representing "the culprit as he appeared at the bar on the day of trial." At night I slept, indeed; but a jury of twelve well-fed Londoners were sitting on my stomach, determined not to retire because they were agreed upon their verdict.

Every hour, after the second day, I expected to hear of the inevitable calamity. I pictured the sufferer dying; I pictured him dead. Then I recalled him to life, by that stomach-pump process by which the imagination in its extremity works, and felt that he might possibly survive through the third day.

But at length I *knew* he must be dead; and now for

the revelation. Was he a son—a father? His relations would never permit him to perish so, without an inquiry. Was he married? would his wife be taken up on suspicion of having poisoned him? Was he a resident anywhere in the neighbourhood; and should I myself be summoned upon the inquest? Every question had its separate sting. Of ten thousand daily speculations, each inflicted its excruciating torture.

But days rolled on; sunrise, noon, sunset, night; all regularly came round, and brought no discovery. Not a "shocking occurrence," not a "horrible event," was to be found in the journals, morning or evening.

It appeared, just at that time, as though the wheels of the world were rolling round without running over anybody. In the vast crowd of society, not a toe was trodden on. Either the reporters were dead, or "fatal accidents" had gone quite out of fashion. It is true that no stranger, during a whole fortnight, set his foot within the shop without throwing me into an ague-fit. It is true that, throughout the same period, my eye never fell upon man or woman clad in mourning, without turning to a ball of fire in my head, with the consciousness that it beheld one of the bereaved and injured relatives of my innocent victim. Still no sign of detection came; and although my bitter self-reproaches continued, my horror of the halter began considerably to abate. When——

[Here the chemist once more paused, and raising, not a glass, but a tankard of iced water to his lips, his disturbed countenance totally disappeared for a few minutes.]

——One afternoon, as I was standing in a more tranquil mood at the farther end of the shop, gazing at the chimneys of the opposite house, and inwardly murmuring,

"Is thy face like——"

I proceeded no further with the apostrophe, for at that instant my treasure of an apprentice flew to my side, crushed one of my toes under his thick shoe, and compressed his whole volume of voice into a soul-awakening whisper, as he said,

"This is *him!*"

Him! I immediately looked at the object so ungrammatically indicated.

There stood before me a tall, gaunt, sallow-visaged man of forty-five. His eyes were dull, and his jaws were thin. He looked like one who had suffered, whether abroad or at home, much sickness; had exposed an iron frame to severe trials in strong and searching remedies; had borne their effects well, and lived on in hope of a cure. There he stood—who was he?

The treasure, in whose eye there was a ray of satisfaction, darted a significant glance at me, which seemed again to say, "This is *him*," as he bent forward a little, over the counter, to ascertain the customer's wishes.

"Young man," said the stranger—

His lips were quite dry, and his voice very hollow—

"Young man, observe me!"

Here he looked intently into the treasure's face, and continued with peculiar impressiveness—

"You prepared me some pills lately; I see you have not forgotten; some pills, I say; look, here is the prescription! Ah, you recognise it. Yes, it was you indeed who served me. Pray, mind then what I say. Let me have *another* box of those pills; *exactly*, mind, *exactly*, like the last; for never did I procure pills anywhere that did me half so much good!"

* * * * * *

"Your story is interesting," said I, encouragingly.

"I am no judge of that," returned the chemist with a sigh; "but it is true."

SOME ACCOUNT OF A LEVELLER.

A SLIGHT sketch of the character and career of a person lately about town, Pittkins Gribble by name, may assist the reader, should he desire such help, in bringing before his mind's eye an image of that practical philosopher (ever prowling here and there to find out whom or what he can pull down), called the leveller.

The earliest recorded anecdote of our hero will serve as well as any other to introduce him in all his original great-mindedness to posterity.

It is related of Little Gribb (as we used to call him at the Charter-house), that when his fond parents first brought him up to London, and conducting him to the famous Monument on Fish-street Hill, bade him look, saying in tones of admiring awe, "There, Pittkins, isn't *that* high?" the youthful Pittkins standing opposite the now reformed bully, that still lifts its head but lies no more, ran his eye up the column, even from the base to the golden flame at the top, and then down again, measuringly; and then up once more; and at length, with a sneer that alone settled the question of altitude, to the prejudice of the Monument, replied boldly to the parental query,

"Not so *very* high! Gemini gosh!"

What may be the exact form of words for which the above mystical exclamation was adopted as a substitute, it is impossible at this remote day to say; but that it was employed complimentarily we cannot conceive; and perhaps it may be understood as conveying wonder, not at the height of the column, but at the measure of its renown; a sneer put into language; a note of non-

admiration to finish off the plain English, "Not so *very* high!"

Little Gribb became great; yet diminutive he remained all his days. He had a pinched visage, and a sour expression; a small, deep-set eye, and a sharp, thin voice; a head remarkably flat, and shoulders conspicuously round.

From early infancy, he entertained a rooted and impatient dislike of everything in which others seemed to take any particular pride; of everything, great or little, that appeared to have been set up with care and labour. When other children were building houses of cards, placing each upon each with the exactest art and the most watchful anxiety, his eye would follow every slow and cautious movement with curious pleasure, to think how he should have the satisfaction presently of bringing the whole fabric down with a touch, a puff of breath.

Grown older, the feeling manifested itself in numberless ways. It required various circumstances, all conspiring to insure secrecy, to enable him to enjoy his especial luxury, which consisted in cropping off, just at the top of the stem, with a smart switch, some of his grandfather's choice tulips; but on thistles and wild flowers, as he rambled through the fields, he had no mercy; and it was astonishing how laboriously he would amuse himself in this manner for hours, going out of his way as often as the clusters of flowery heads presented themselves at a distance, candidates for decapitation.

The mere destruction of toys, flowers, birds' nests, and similar trifles to which he entertained an antipathy, though carried on upon an extensive scale denoting unwearied industry, ceased of course to have charms when he had become master of a pistol, and could shoot

sparrows in a cage six feet off. The gun, however light, was rather more than his puny frame could manage in those days—and he was never strong; but he evinced the most passionate fondness for pigeon-shooting, and was early in life proprietor of a trap. When shooting was inconvenient, his favourite game was nine-pins, which he pursued, however, quite solitarily; for although he had somebody to set them up for him, he never permitted any one to knock them down but himself.

By the time he had arrived at man's estate, and taken possession of his own, it was clear that Pittkins Gribble was proprietor of a great fortune, and he speedily proceeded therefore to knock it down. Goldsmith's genteel bear, who hated everything as was low, was the antipodes of Gribble, who hated everything that was high.

The only idea of greatness that he could consent to tolerate for an instant, was some gigantic project of his own for levelling greatness. Various grand notions floated doubtless through his vast mind without settling, and many plans combining everything came to nothing.

Whether, for example, he ever seriously entertained the intention of forming a company for pulling down the Pyramids, and paving the desert with the materials, is only a matter of conjecture; but he never could bear to hear of the dimensions of those edifices; nor, with the exception of the costs of extensive statistical tables and estimates, did he publicly spend any very large sums upon his favourite experiment, of reducing Chimborazo from its altitude of twenty-one thousand feet, to the exact height of Shooter's Hill; four hundred and fifty feet being, as he was wont to remark, quite elevation enough for any reasonable mountain suitable for Christians to climb.

But he did, as an Englishman, feel considerable

jealousy and dissatisfaction at the superior elevation which hills have been allowed to maintain in Wales and Scotland; and although he could never be brought to acknowledge that any one of them was a single foot higher than our own; in fact, he never thought highly even of Mont Blanc; yet he did not scruple to confess that Snowdon stood rather too much above the level of the sea, and that Ben Nevis should certainly be taken down a little. But as in accomplishing this work, the bills too would run high, he would naturally object to them.

Returning from Rome, when the party he had joined were comparing their impressions on entering St. Peter's, one declared that he was struck with the harmony of the proportions; another with the mellowness of light and shadow; a third with the airy loftiness; a fourth with the grandeur of space around him, &c. Gribble, on being asked what his impression was, said he was struck with the snugness of the building.

Pittkins professed to be totally disappointed with America. He thought the woods and forests there inferior to Coombe and Epping, and was surprised to find the Hudson such a narrow strip of river. Nature probably might have meant it for some broad stream, but had evidently left it unfinished. Niagara was no prodigy to Pittkins; he considered the Fall to be not particularly Great; it had been over-rated; was only water, and would be sure to find its level.

Having travelled to Patagonia, on purpose to effect a personal measurement of the inhabitants, whose average height he ascertained to be identical with that of the Laplanders (his own number of inches) he returned to London; a city to which, by this time, he was prepared to deny all claim to the title of the Great Metropolis. It was very well in its way; he wished to have nothing

to say against it; it might pass muster if its pretensions were not thrust forward ostentatiously in ridiculous and hyperbolical epithets.

Powers of slander and ingratitude, incomparable as incomprehensible! it was thus that he would presume, in his all-levelling humour, to speak of glorious, matchless, faultless, beloved London; that city of the soul, that Araby thrice blessed; the true Utopia made easy, and adapted to the meanest as to the mightiest capacity!

But Britain itself was not so Great for that matter; this he undertook to prove any day. It only measured so many miles from east to west, and so many from north to south; and contained but such a number of square yards at the utmost. Into the political speculations of Pittkins there is no occasion to enter here; but perhaps he did not think much of Great Britain's institutions; and of Magna Charta especially, he has been heard to say that it was far from being any great matter after all.

When I called upon him on his return, I found him burnt out of his newly-furnished house, before he had leisure to insure it. A fire had swept away two or three mansions close to his; everybody alarmed, declared it was a great conflagration; very! but Pittkins insisted that it was a very little one, and in fact no conflagration at all. And to prove his sincerity, he positively refused to permit an article of property to be disturbed; an atom to be removed from the sanctuary, wherein, of course, all was presently consumed.

Such was the depreciatory spirit in which I found him! He could not hear even a fire distinguished by the epithet "great," without throwing cold water on it, in a sense the least likely to effect its extinguishment. I rather suspect, from something that fell from him,

that he was a little jealous of the meritorious efficiency of the fire-brigade. To extol even a superior engine in his presence, would have been to draw down upon it showers of fiery vituperation.

Making every allowance for his loss, and fancying that his mind just then might be unhinged, I proposed an evening at the play. The performance unluckily happened to be 'Alexander the Great.' The word jarred unpleasantly on the ear of the grudging Gribble, and the Macedonian was macadamised on the spot. Gribble would accord not one atom of greatness to the royal hero's share. He would not permit him to be a great conqueror, or a great madman, scarcely a great fool, but the play itself he said was excellent.

As for the actor who played the monarch, being the best in the piece and a great public favourite, he had not, as it was found upon an impartial consideration of his pretensions, a solitary qualification for his art! The performers next in rank, although deemed to be deplorably off, were not so shamefully destitute; while the underlings who did nothing, were considered to have been capable of distinguishing themselves, if they had had anything to do. It was only the leading actor, he who obtained all the applause, whose merits were utterly invisible; and when it was intimated that he was largely *paid*, as well as loudly praised, Gribble's indignation knew no bounds, but pronounced him an impostor at once.

Discoursing further it appeared that upon all subjects his mind took the same tone. Whatever stood high he considered to be fair game. The tide of prejudice always rolled on till it broke to foam and froth against an eminence.

Gribble, as in the case of Alexander, being quite ready at all times to demonstrate that whosoever was

surnamed "the Great;" must necessarily be a nobody, was not likely to fall in with the general estimate of the claims of the great living Captain to his warrior-wreath; and when allusion was made to the abundant laurels which Sir Arthur had acquired in India, Gribble it was —Pittkins Gribble, who peremptorily denied, and obstinately persisted in his denial, that the youthful general had ever brought home a single laurel from that country.

"But this," exclaimed he, "is the spirit of false worship that prevails, the adulation that cries up cleverness as greatness. I say, not a laurel was reaped there; for, as it happens, the laurel does not grow in the land."

Gribble, however, if he would not give honour where honour was due, and scorned to call that eminent which the world accounted so, was always ready with his frank, his generous admission, that there was an abundance of great generalship scattered in the raw material, through the ranks, and that thousands of Marlboroughs and Wellingtons; thousands, were at that moment serving at tenpence a day.

This was equally noticeable in relation to other professors, high and low. It was always to be observed, and let any one who ever knew one of the family of Gribble in this life, mark the fact, that Pittkins was no enemy to talent, so long as talent was unknown. He cherished no feeling hostile to desert, so long as desert was unrewarded and unappreciated. He never condescended to run down excellence of any kind, so long as all mankind agreed never to say a single syllable about the excellence in question.

A poet might hold in his shabby ink-bespotted desk, a rare manuscript flashing with golden lines, while his purse lacked even a copper lining; and while the future

benefactor of his race, unskilled in the fashion of the literature of the passing hour, was languishing in low obscurity, would Gribble, Pittkins Gribble, be the man, to seize rudely on his verses, to subject them to bitter criticism, and hold up their magnificence to scorn? No.

And the man of science, the philosopher, might continue (like illustrious Adam Warner in the famous romance), to cherish, and cultivate, and perfect, and pine over his grand invention for the world's good in safety; free from interruption, exempt from the least sneer, the lightest contumelious glance, as far as Gribble was concerned. He trod not upon worms.

It was only when the gloriously modelled, the wonder-working instrument, ceased to be a secret, and came into full play under the world's inspection; it was not till the golden-lined manuscript had been made more lustrous still by the agency of printer's ink, and in that condition been bent over by rapt brows, glowing cheeks, and eager eyes, that the soul of Pittkins was at all concerned about either; and it was not until the poet and the philosopher had passed through the shadows of adversity, the cold regions of neglect, into honour and success, that Gribble, in the magnanimity of his nature, took the trouble to assail them.

The deservers whom *he* challenged must be successful deservers; the merits he disputed must be fully recognised. Truly, indeed—most true—he trod not upon mere worms; but when the poor, dull, unpromising things turned out to be glow-worms, their brightness became offensive, and he instinctively put out his foot.

Let this justice be done to all the Gribbles; at least to Pittkins of that ilk. He railed only at the eminent, the popular authors. He despised only Scott, Bulwer, &c. He allowed to one, antiquarian research; to another, a kind of eloquence (a favourite phrase); to a

third, some knowledge of London streets; to a fourth, skill in stage effect; to another yet, a familiarity with salt-water; and he would discriminatingly put his finger upon a passage here and there, saying—

"Now that is positively not so bad!"

But then Pittkins had a constant knack of drawing from under his cloak, or producing from some sly corner or other, an odious, old-looking, abominable first volume, or perhaps all three (it might be a tale by the late Rev. William Soft, or a story by Mrs. Spangle), and of crying out with some exultation, like a real patron of neglected genius—

"Now, talking of novels, don't say I admire nothing at all; here *is* a novel if you like," &c.

And thus the heartiness of the praise bestowed on trash, gave quite a conscientious turn to the jealous and spiteful abuse of excellence.

The Gribbles are cunning, but like the vast majority of cunning people, not cunning enough.

If you had ever caught Pittkins at an exhibition, you would have found him prying into the unlikeliest corner, or raising his glass at the uppermost line of paintings, in search of the unpopular picturesque; but for the great pictures, the acknowledged beauties, the canvas whose forms and colours are the finished and perfect offspring of exquisite genius and unwearied labour, he had no eye at all for them, but only a little contemptuous breath; or, in a case of extraordinary merit and popularity, a rather longer tirade against mannerism and affectation, pronouncing the all-admired painting to be—

"A bad specimen of a bad school; decidedly the worst thing the artist ever did."

If Pittkins saw no merit in living artists, when they were much talked of and admired, it was not that he

recognised this merit in the old masters instead. One of his favourite maxims was that the cartoons of Raffaelle were failures. In his judgment of modern authors, he was equally uninfluenced by any overweening partiality for the works of the dead. He considered Shakspeare to be a fashionable poet. He held the old dramatists generally to be vulgar writers, who just knew something of the passions. Milton was heavy, but Pope (in consideration of his being much abused) was voted to be pretty in parts. Spratt and Blackmore he regarded as rising poets.

One particular saying of his may be noticed here: that "he thought Dr. Johnson a particularly small creature, and should have much liked living in his time, that he (Pittkins Gribble) might have told him so to his teeth."

It was therefore from no immediately personal feeling that Pittkins railed at the living, wherever he happened to see (which assuredly was not everywhere) desert duly exalted, and virtue rewarded. When he declared upon his conscience, for he frequently spoke of it, that although he had been much in Italy, and knew more of music than of any art or science extant, he never had—never in all his days—heard such a bellowing barbarian as Rubini; it was not that he detested Rubini's reputation more than he detested the fame of Orpheus. Whosoever excelled his fellows in anything, mentally or bodily—it was all the same—was equally hateful to the green-eyed monster crouching in the soul of Gribble.

When, for instance, he was shown into the apartment of the Irish giant, whom he found attended by company, he, with many measuring glances directed at the individuals comprising the assembly, inquired—

"*Which* is the person whom I came here to see?"

And when he heard an acquaintance commenting on the corpulency of Daniel Lambert, he took me aside, and whispered in a jealous, envious tone—

"Did you hear that exaggeration? Now it so happens that, when I was quite young, I went to see that noted personage, and on my honour—I speak it cautiously and within bounds—he was *rather thin than otherwise.*"

His intolerance, therefore, was alike inveterate, whether directed against "the Great," as we have already seen, or "the Fat," as we see here. Aristides being called emphatically "the just," he looked upon as a bit of a rogue; and even the title of "Peter the Cruel" appeared objectionable to his ears.

"Gross flattery, no doubt," was his remark; "there may be, for aught these historians can tell, as much cruelty in my single nature as in a whole kingdom-full of Peters."

In short, Pittkins always deemed an eminent person to be something like a hare—never so good as when it has been run down.

It was not alone realities, as I have already shown, that excited ill-will and jealous rancour in the breast of the universal critic, Gribble. The most shadowy and fantastic points of distinction would suffice for him to hang a protest upon. When, one day, he read at the top of a playbill the remarkable announcement—

"Ninth night of the celebrated comedian Potts, the *acknowledged* son of Momus—"*

Gribble, who never professed to be a comedian, even in joke, turned pale with rage, and spoke as though his daily bread had been snatched from his lips:

"It is false—quite false; he has never been so acknowledged; and I'll engage to prove, in five minutes, that Potts is no relation to Momus at all!"

* Fact: in a play-bill recently issued at the east end of London.

The idea of such a distinction, of a mortal comedian being *owned* by such a father, quite overcame the sensitive Pittkins. He could not bear to hear even Cupid spoken of so continually; and when he found the name introduced too often in poetry or conversation, he would remind the bystander that, after all, "Cupid was not the *legitimate* son of Venus."

With regard to the mythological lady last mentioned, her sex, as in the case of mortal ones, however endowed or however celebrated, was no security against her being shamefully traduced. Having denied to her any pretension to virtue, he actually begrudged to Venus the glory of her good looks. Thus, if any classical and romantic youth, enormously enamoured, chanced to compare the lady in the pink bonnet, whom he saw near the Serpentine, to Venus rising from the sea—as such similitudes will present themselves to the blind eyes of love—Pittkins, jealous and affronted at the double idolatry thus avowed, would say:

"Of your mortal divinity, my friend, I am no judge, having seen nothing at all of her except the pink bonnet and the blue nose that peeped timidly out of it; but now—as for your other divinity, Venus, do you know I more than doubt all that story about her [illegible]ive beauty!"

Now, very true it is (pushing Pittkins aside for a few seconds), that there may be a principle on which we have some right to regard Venus herself as being not a bit handsomer than she should be—and if any, it would be on this; that her beauty has been so vehemently insisted on, so mathematically demonstrated. When the world begins to rave about accurate proportions, and miracles of measurement, we at once begin to feel that limits have been set to beauty, otherwise illimitable, undefinable, inexpressible.

Hazlitt has an acute remark in his criticism upon Fielding, that bears upon the point. The great delineator of character, conscious that his charming heroine, Sophia Western, is but a country girl after all, feels that he has but a weak case in the prejudiced reader's estimation, with reference to the refinement and the beauty he desires to bestow upon her. He thence falls into an error; and proceeds, not merely to paint her portrait very elaborately, but to insist so often, nay, at every fresh adventure, every change of attitude she may assume in the story, so strenuously upon her graces and accomplishments, that we half suspect in the end (says Hazlitt) that the charming Sophia was but a dowdy. It is something to find out the likeness of a little flaw in such rare art.

Returning to our leveller, it may be taken for granted that when he begrudged a goddess her charms, he would not willingly concede to a god his full measure of renown. Envy, jealousy, detraction, hatred of all qualities which shoot above the common level; these feelings are capable of breaking into such singular excesses, of penetrating into such almost incredible nooks and corners of our nature, that there is nothing scarcely that can be said to be unnatural as food for their ravenous appetites.

Why, Pittkins Gribble had a secret grudge, in virtue of a long-descended fame, against Agamemnon—the "great men" who lived before that ancient Greek only escaping by reason of their namelessness; and when he heard a burst of admiration from many lips, on view of a fine picture, the infant Hercules strangling the serpents, he called Hercules a humbug, and declared that he had read in an old book a refutation of the fact pourtrayed; they were not serpents at all; but *eels*, mere live eels!

It was often remarked that while Gribble's favourite and indeed sole occupation in life was to asperse and depreciate, he never was heard to utter a word in his own disparagement. He never, with a weak modesty, appeared to think himself less than the greatest whom he traduced. On this point he once made an observation, which though it bears hard upon a large part of the world, a small part of the said world would say, is not entirely destitute of truth.

"A wise man," said Pittkins, "will readily speak ill of anybody, rather than of himself. If he censures another, people admire his sagacity: if he censures his own conduct, they know him to be a fool."

When Gribble stood in the pillory; the last man who did stand there (he was thought to have brought that plan of punishment into disgrace, and to have hastened its downfal); when he stood in the pillory for slander, backed by a touch of perjury, he was asked, having been first removed from his elevation in the midst of that sea of faces, whether he did not think the crowd immense. He sneered at the notion. He could not bear the idea of immensity, even in a mob.

"Not at all," he replied, "it was by no means a great crowd. Do you call that a crowd? it was a *sprinkling*."

And when death drew nigh, at whose approach poor Pittkins manifested considerable repugnance to any nearer intimacy: and when good people told him that high and low were equal in the grave, that death was a great leveller:

"A leveller, truly," gasped the dying depreciator, half raising himself by a parting effort of disparagement in the mind; his eye glazed, and his voice weakening at each successive syllable—

"Yes, a leveller, no doubt; but not, observe me, not such a great—leveller."

Gribble was, even in that moment, thinking of his own claims to a superior distinction.

THE STORY OF A DUN.

Among the members of a small private family, what advertisers call a family of respectability, duly assembled at a certain period after breakfast, the brisk warm firelight diffuses cheerfulness in spite of the obstinate dreariness of a November morning: one of those mornings that come in the character of night, and keep up a very successful imitation thereof until the arrival of the original. The comfort within, in fact, is all the brighter for the gloom without. The "guinea" like lady surrounded by her shining "seven-shilling pieces," is lustre itself. Each has some pleasant and appropriate occupation. The lady herself is writing notes; hem-stitch absorbs the innocent daughter's mind; another pretty damsel is drawing, perhaps; a little boy loses himself in happy wonder over the history of "Lord Nelson," or the "Adventures of the White Cat;" some other member of the domestic paradise, more usefully employed than all, has an especial eye to the fire, the mere stirring of which requires something of genius in that dark season; the horrid music-lesson, which has been unvaried during the past six weeks, and which every soul in the house, except the young learner, has been practised in for a month, is over for the day; the very cat that winks upon the rug is not more comfortable, more truly tranquil, more insensible to the

approach of annoyance, than the least anticipatory of the group: when to the eyes of the Adam and Eve of the Eden, the apartment is suddenly filled with fog; the scene within and the scene without are of a colour; the guinea loses its brightness, and the seven-shilling pieces seem mere gilt fourpences. Whence comes the cloud over this happy valley? Whence the conviction in its master's heart, that every Englishman's house is not his castle; that *his* has been assaulted by a ruthless enemy! There was a knock at the door a minute ago; could a simple rap scare and disperse into foul fog, the golden beauty of that domestic dream! Is it the intrusion of a disagreeable visitor who means to stop to dinner that is dreaded in this quiet circle? No: it is the knock, the mere knock of a known Dun, that has instantaneously frighted the house from its propriety. One fall of the knocker only, and the mansion of the respectable family has felt a touch of earthquake. "The man from Mr. Spriggs has called by appointment."

Who is so uncandid as to deny, that the intrusion of such an applicant, at such an hour, and in such a season, is particularly vexatious.

A fine day in spring, is human nature's "best restorer," except, perhaps, brandy in some cases. Its influence is universal. All degrees and conditions of life are participators in the bounty of the sunshine. Even the blind are conscious of something livelier than blank darkness. The patient creditor, peeping out upon the morning, feels already half-paid; the wandering beggar smiles as he interprets the glow on every face into the sign of a generosity that will give unasked; the very prisoner looks up, as at the presence of something beautiful in his dungeon; the monarch welcomes in it a treasure unpurchasable. "My heart leaps up," the poet sings—

"My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky."

But how a man's heart sinks again, when he beholds a dun in the street! Vainly will he endeavour to keep his eye upon the rainbow; there is no hope for him there, and other covenants of a less peaceful character, will thrust themselves between him and the light. And with countless rainbows mingled into one in the sky above him, man meditates his accustomed morning stroll where ladies are most abroad; draws on his gloves, receives his hat, and reaches the ready-opened door, just in time to recognise, but too late to be undiscovered by, the punctual persecutor employed by some other Mr. Spriggs. There, planted as it would seem upon the step, a toad peering out of the stone in which he is imbedded; there, right in the way, with the errand on which he comes gleaming in his eye; there, above all, by appointment, for the nine-and-fortieth time by appointment, always, as the genius of persecution and cross purposes will have it, always by appointment, there he stands, with his finger and thumb to the rim of his hat, just in the attitude in which he presented himself ten days ago, with the selfsame look and tone, with the very words, as before, "wait upon you by appointment."

No gentleman, married or single, will hesitate to confess, that among the morning-ills, to which the flesh of debtors is heir, this sort of incident, occurring at your own door, and in broad daylight, when there 's no escape, is enormously provoking.

Howsoever a man may dine, whether he has company or not, the moment of sitting down to dinner is one of the happiest of the day: so is the moment of settling himself cozily for a solitary doze afterwards: not less anticipatory and blissful is the close of dinner,

if preparatory to a retreat to the opera or the theatre. It is a moment when fate may be most securely defied; man "defies augury," he cares not what dreams may come, what dull ranting may follow; all is eager hope, rapturous excitement; and he exclaims with the far-sighted Mr. Falkland, "Now nothing can possibly give me a moment's uneasiness." The reflection has no sooner become fixed and positive, than a pressing application is brought; the Dun as before; a heavy bill has been dishonoured, and there is a large amount to be made up; would not have presumed to send at that hour upon any account; nothing but imperative necessity; shocked to think of giving so much trouble just before or just after dinner: but, at the same time, if his victim *had* found leisure to look into the account, and if he *would* pardon the great liberty!——

We are far from supposing that any human being will refuse assent to the proposition that a misadventure of this nature, just as a gentleman has made up his mind that there is no such thing as a blue devil within a thousand miles of him; with his foot, perhaps, on the carriage-step, and his soul already entranced in a fiction whose beauty consists in bearing no resemblance to the realities of life; that it is, to say the least, prodigiously disagreeable.

It is palpably unnecessary to make an express specification of every period of the day at which the visitation of the Dun is unwelcome, offensive, and ill-timed. When you are dressing, or at breakfast, or as you are going out or coming in, reading, writing, or playing a rubber, or killing time in a gossip about the queer people opposite, at every season the Dun is an intruder; most of all, when the check-book is out for some essential purpose, such as a draft for current cash, or a club-subscription. All this must be admitted; and indeed

the shortest way of settling the point, is to acknowledge that any hour of the day before supper, say midnight, is shamefully unseasonable, and every such visit should be deemed a scandalous breach of etiquette and delicacy.

Agreeing with the whole world to this extent, we shall not be accused by the most uncharitable and jealous of our fellow-mortals of the least possible want of sympathy with the victims of the Dun.

We can feel for them all. We can imagine, aided by hints from friends, and an attentive perusal of the biographies of illustrious men, the full extent of their sufferings. It is undoubtedly a distressing thing to be dunned. "I know no greater pain," said a good duke now no more, "than to be asked a favour, and lack the power to grant it." And what favour is so delicate, so important, or so hard to grant, as that which is the object of the Dun's solicitation! Anything is easier than paying debts. Oh! the pain of postponement must be acute; for what is it but telling the inflicter of it to "call again!" It is like desiring the savage wretch who flourishes his lash over you, to favour you with another cut. The smart of each stripe is enough of itself; but it is aggravated a thousand fold by the horrid necessity of petitioning for more. We feel to the quick the annoyance and mortification of the Dun's presence; and yet all we can do is, to enter into an arrangment with him for a continuance of the agony. "I must trouble you to inflict this torture upon me again next Thursday;" or, "Whenever you are passing this way, look in and make me truly miserable." The evil you labour under is the sight of his visage, the sound of his voice; the only remedy you have for this evil, ensures you a renewal of it at no distant day. A man must be more brutal than human, whose heart

fails to sympathise with man under such dispensations as these. What commiseration has been excited by the fate of some stricken bird; was it of the goose species? because it was his own feather that winged the fatal dart. How much more should we pity the persecuted debtor, when he himself, writhing under the long-dreaded visit, is doomed, with his own lips, to desire his tormentor to repeat the blow, to follow up his remorseless purpose, to come and reopen the wound at an appointed hour; in hacknied phrase, to call again to-morrow! This is winging the fatal dart with his own feather, if you like.

Guarded then by these admissions from a suspicion of insensibility on the one hand, and of some sinister motive on the other; let us, under the guidance of a spirit of benevolence that embraces both parties, visitor and visited, consider whether it is quite right that sympathy should flow invariably on one side of the question only; that human regard and pity should ever be stagnant and frozen on the other. One pair of hands gathered flowers to strew upon Nero's tomb; one pair of hands (his own most likely) clapped at Jackson's comedy; nothing is so irredeemably and unmixedly bad, as not to awaken a touch of loving and merciful feeling in somebody's mind. The Dun is at least entitled to his due, quite as much as another busybody with whom prejudice is apt to associate him, and of whom it is handsomely admitted that he is not so black as he is painted. So, now, say we of the Dun! Boldly be it said, and with a simple dignity of assertion worthy of a newly-discovered fact. Here is a truth now uttered for the first time since the day when man's name was first entered in his fellow-man's books; since the bright propitious hour which gave birth to the great Indis-

pensable; to the world's strong prop and generous helpmate, unlimited, eternal, glorious Credit!

Look at the Dun! cast your eyes in *any* direction; a winter's fog condensed into a day, has no darkness to hide one specimen of the thousands that throng the highways of the world. Steadily, quietly, punctually he pursues, what may, with peculiar accuracy, be designated his calling. What virtues are his! And mark, how zealously and perseveringly he exhibits them! A grand and essential virtue in itself; for in what is he who secretes his good qualities better than the miser who locks up his gold. The Dun's virtues are in constant exercise, they are constantly seen in exercise, and they are constantly growing brighter by exercise. When was he ever known to fail in fidelity to his employer? When did he ever forget his errand? When was he ever guilty of a broken promise? You may take his word for any time, or for any amount. He tells you that the debt is exactly 73*l.* 13*s.* 5*d.*, and it is. He says he will call at half-past eleven on Saturday the 21st, and he does. Never did he shock your notions of self-consequence so much as not to recollect you, though he saw your back only, and that a quarter of a mile off. To such a pitch of delicacy does he carry this spirit of compliment, that although he may not have seen you for a twelvemonth, having in the interval been busied in prying into myriads of faces, he at once identifies your visage with your name, and will tell you besides whether you were christened Matthew or Peter. His scrupulous and undeviating punctuality is the more extraordinary and commendable, inasmuch as it is wholly unencouraged by the habits of those with whom he is brought into collision; if example would corrupt him, he would certainly break his word. His sense of

justice is only equalled by his moderation; he never in his life asked for more than his own, yet is ever glad to take less, and indeed satisfied if he gets nothing. Never was resolution not to pay so strong as his patience in waiting for payment. Despair of raising money to meet his demand, admits of no comparison with his hope of getting it. His crowning virtue is his invariable good temper, his politeness in acknowledgment of courtesy, tinged, it is not too much to say, so at least in some instances it has seemed to be, tinged with gratitude, actually with gratitude, for being once more put off. Assuredly, the true Dun does like to call; and making another appointment with him, is fixing the day for a repetition of the pleasure which he now has in catching you at home.

The tactics of Duns in general, vary of course with the habits of those they seek. Gentlemen are sure to be persecuted with gentility; the meaner class of people must be content to take their torments as they can get them. They often find themselves in the situation of the forlorn European, who, in a barbarous region, was sentenced to decapitation without the convenience of a block. "Block, eh? No, no, luxuries are scarce in these parts." For example, the humble must not look to be indulged with the luxury of a letter, to the appeal urged in which an answer is respectfully requested. They have a visit, ending in a promise of another. How this is kept, has already been intimated. Debtors of a superior class are not unfrequently accommodated with what may be called epistolary suggestions, or notes of invitation to pay up. The first of the series shadows forth its object with a delicate reminiscence of a bill delivered. The second presumes to call attention to an account that made its way into existence last Christmas twelvemonth. This is followed, six months

afterwards, by a reluctant hint that the amount would be exceedingly acceptable; and there is a successor to this, in about three months more, to the effect that the money is required on or before the 30th instant. The fifth communication, in a different and more clerk-like hand, sets forth that the writer has been instructed to apply for an early settlement, and that his chambers are in Lincoln's-inn; the sixth, expressing great regret, urges the impossibility of further delay; then follows a brief but respectful assurance of immediate proceedings, unless, &c.; and this is succeeded by a still more laconic note, mentioning the day on which hostilities will be commenced.

Whether addressed eastward or westward, these communications are confined to the higher and happier order of debtors. To the class below these, the attentions of a collector, manifested in practical and less dilatory visitations, are directed. The applicant is an experienced and genuine Dun, an unexceptionable specimen of his tribe. He is quite prepared for the evasive, but sometimes triumphant expedient, of a bank-note boldly proffered in payment of the claim; a note requiring change. (The debt amounts to thirty-four pounds, the note is a fifty; the Dun lacks the difference, can't give change, and must call some other time.) For this the acute and elderly Dun (dunning demands the knowledge of a lifetime to achieve perfection) is, as we have said, prepared. He goes forth in the morning armed with ample change. The note must be large indeed from which he cannot deduct the sum-total of his demand, rendering back the difference. And as dunning, now so widely practised as a profession, numbers among its votaries so many persons of proved and still improving genius, we should recommend to debtors in general the prudence of abstaining from all mention

of the note; certainly of witholding anything like an exhibition of it, in case it should have existence; and of proffering their own note of hand for fifty pounds instead, with an appeal for the balance; consenting, if cash be not procurable on the spot, to an arrangement that the said balance shall stand over till the morning. Indeed, it is highly probable, that this may already be the more popular mode of adjusting such differences, where the Dun will consent to it. But he is so obstinate. In his case, knowledge *is* power.

It frequently happens that the Dun is his own master; that is, that the creditor is his own Dun. The distinction will be observed perhaps in a certain independence of manner, and an increased rigidity of purpose. He applies for his right *as* a right, and in spite of his somewhat forced deference, it is perceptible that he will have it, be the plea of delay what it will. The Dun of this degree will be recognised by one or two cunning devices. Conscious of his position as a Dun, he ventures not to ply the knocker with the freedom accorded to the ordinary visitor of the family; and yet, equally conscious of his position as creditor, he cannot descend to the meanness and subserviency of a single rap. In this dilemma, and to the curious in such matters we suggest the niccty as not undeserving notice, being a practical expedient, he comes to the compromise of a pull at the bell. The ring brings the servant into the area, instead of to the door; but in vain are all appeals to the dignified Dun from that quarter; he neither sees nor hears, but keeps his eyes fixed on the chimneys of the houses over the way, until the door is opened to him, due respect exacted, and his business demanded with proper politeness and ceremony.

But at the same time the Dun of this stamp, dunning on his own account, is sometimes discoverable by an

extraordinary laxity of purpose. There are men at this very hour, in the heart of London, who have no more idea of the true mode of hunting a debtor, than a tortoise has of a foxchase; in fact, who never hunted one at all. It sounds rather extraordinary in an age so enlightened as this; but the fact *is* a fact. They have been known, all through a lifetime, and up to this moment, in spite of daily deceptions practised upon their simplicity, to take a debtor's word, to put faith in his promises, and actually to believe that his expected remittances are already on the road. They drop sometimes into an all but incredulous state of credulity; they become the Dun's antipodes; they won't take the money when it is offered. Shall we relate an instance of self-denial and philanthropy more inconceivable even than this? Not the only one that ever occurred, but the only one we have happened to hear of, and not yet perhaps a month old. "I am ashamed," said the conscientious debtor (there are such), "to offer you such a trifle as this; your account has been long standing, and you never asked me for money in your life before. But I can't pay you at present, and to part even with ten pounds pinches me." The creditor was no first-class tradesman, he was grievously pressed; he took the ten, and was as thankful as though he had been asked for a receipt in full. But in the evening he came again. Does he repent of his moderation? has he turned Dun indeed? No; he respectfully hopes that his feeling will not be misunderstood; but something was said about pinching; he will contrive to manage his heavy bill somehow without putting a customer to inconvenience; and he begs to be permitted to return the ten pounds which his necessity in the morning had tempted him to receive! Such Duns are to be met with, if the right sort of debtors would seek them.

The Dun legitimate, however, has neither licence nor inclination so to act. His principle of business is to show no lenity but what tends to his own interest. He must neither be so severe with his victim as to offend or frighten him, nor so indulgent as to beget a notion that he himself is easily to be put off or unlikely to return with punctuality to the attack. Above all, he is never to dream of giving back cash, under any pretence, that has once been in his hands. "No money returned, *vivat Regina!*" is his motto. He is to be direct, upright, and undisguised, when he can thus most readily attain his object; but he may resort to innocent tricks and honest deceptions when expedient. These require no explanation from us. They will peep out and explain themselves, as we proceed with our simple history, the Story of a Dun; of *the* Dun, we should have rather written, for never had he his fellow. Had our name been but once upon his books, had we known *how* to owe him anything, he should have dunned us!

It was at the very commencement of the present century, in the autumn of 18—, as the phrase is, that our young but inquisitive eyes first fell upon the person of the Dun; where, need not be distinctly set forth, further than by specifically stating that it was in —— street, London. He was standing upon the uppermost door-step of a house, immediately opposite our then abode, with one hand in his pocket, and the other on a full-sized bright brass knocker. That image has never been effaced from our recollection. Thirty-five years have not tarnished a button on his coat. There still he stands, in act to knock—THE DUN!

"So stands the statue that affrights the world."

Why we said internally, the very instant our glance fell upon him, "That 's a Dun!" must for ever remain

a mystery. *Why* we thought so, we never in all these years had the remotest guess. We were youthful, and wholly innocent of debt, never had we seen a Dun even in a dream, never wondered what a Dun was like, never thought of such a being, nay, never heard, except as the young imagination hears of "gorgons and monsters and chimeras dire." Was it instinct? This only is certain and clear, that as he stood with one foot on the door-sill, one hand upon the knocker, and the other pocketed, but with no mark or character about him to distinguish him from any one of the unnoticeable ten thousand that hurried past, we said internally, "That 's a Dun!" Had we seen a merman there, or a centaur, or a griffin, we could not have felt so close, so deep, so home an interest. "And so, that 's a Dun!"

To conceive this idea, to stamp the impression on the mind for ever, was but the work of an instant. The thing was settled as soon as thought of; and one instant, indeed, had hardly elapsed when the hand that held the brazen knocker gave signs of animation. It moved, and with it upward moved the massive brass. Then instantaneously followed, such a sound! Niagara, amidst all the sounds that make up its multitudinous roar, has no note like it. How it echoed within the house, I can't say; how it struck upon the ears of passers by, I know not. To others it may have been but as an ordinary knock. To my ears it came, and on my soul it smote, as the knell of a whole generation. It rolled forth, long as it was loud, laden with a proclamation of supernatural import; to what end, with what object or meaning, was beyond apprehension; but the heart owned at once that it was most awful and full of heavy omens. It was a knock that, as it seemed, must have been distinctly heard at the other extremity of the universe. That the house itself did not instantly

come down with the convulsive shock was wonderful. Yet not more marvellous than that the cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples and all, were not equally shaken!

That was the first Dun's knock we ever heard.

There was nobody at home, and the Dun departed. That of course we readily made out, but never discovered more of his story than related to his attendances upon our opposite neighbour. The original amount of the debt, how it had been contracted, how long it had been owing, and how often he had called for it before that day, we never learnt. But we have sometimes surmised that he was born the heir to an old debt, and had been a Dun from his cradle. His name never transpired—he was simply The Dun—nothing more. The trade, the profession he was brought up to, is unknown; the only pursuit he followed, was calling for money at No. 68. His history is not absolutely a blank, yet it is full of blanks.

Dismissed with a "not at home," of course he would call again; and the next day but one we saw him a second time. Having leisure now for observation, our first impression was confirmed. He was a young-looking man, with a rather gentlemanly air, and a good-humoured, cheerful countenance. His cheerful and good-humoured look was not in the least degree clouded, when, after entering the house, and staying about five minutes, he reappeared to view. He skipped down the steps with such lightness, and looked a "good morning" to the old servant with such gaiety, that we concluded at the time he had been paid, and mentally bad him adieu, satisfying ourselves with the reflection that we had at any rate seen an actual live Dun. But it afterwards appeared that he had not been paid exactly, but had received a positive assurance that the gentle-

man didn't at present see the smallest prospect of a settlement; though he thought a call in about six weeks or so couldn't do much harm; still he was unwilling that any creditor of his should put himself to the least unnecessary trouble on his account.

The Dun was there again that day six weeks. He seemed in excellent health and spirits as he approached the house, and was evidently on good terms with all the world when he turned away from it. There was indeed but little time for a revulsion of feeling; for his stay was but momentary. The door was opened as soon as he knocked, and "out of town" announced as soon as the door opened. It occurred to his mind, no doubt, that he should be that way again about Christmas; and perhaps the thought of the holidays might animate him as he tripped along, with nothing in his pocket however except one hand.

Another year had dawned ere his next call was made. He was humming an air as he sprang up the steps, and the brass knocker was instantly touched with so lively an effect, as to excite a notion that the Dun meant, in that language which was to him so familiar and intelligible, to wish the inmates a happy new year. Who could play tunes upon knockers, or make them talk in English undefiled, if he could not? His wish, if understood, was of small avail to him. His creditor could not listen to him at such a season as that. He had more new accounts; far more than he could examine before Easter, without so much as dreaming of a dip into arrears. "Oh! quite out of the question." So the Dun could only resume the air that he was humming as he entered.

Easter came, and so did other seasons, including Christmas once more; so also did the Dun.

"Morn came, and went, and came, and brought *no day*."

Postponements *sine die* were the rule throughout the year, and the maxim that asserts the certainty of an exception was convicted of lying. Still the Dun abated not one jot of his patience or purpose. He was to call "about" such a time; or he might look in, if he liked, the week before or the week after. If the family should be in the country, he could of course renew his application on their arrival in town; and should the gentleman be particularly engaged when he happened to call, why, never mind, another time would do equally well.

During all this time, and during several succeeding years, the Dun was to the eye the selfsame person; there was upon no one occasion the trace of variation visible. His dress was as fresh, his step as elastic, his aspect as lively and open as at first. He looked like unto one whose spirit had fed from childhood on a succession of sweet hopes, without tasting the bitterness of a single disappointment.

But just at the commencement of the Regency, a slight change came over the spirit of the Dun. A singular event happened about that time. He called as usual, knocked as of old, was let in as before. To the question he had put at his preceding visit, "When shall I call again?" the answer was, "Any day next week before twelve o'clock." Conscientious ever, and faithful to his principles as a Dun, he called on Monday the *first* day of the week, before twelve. He felt it to be his duty; he had exercised a similar discrimination, and observed as scrupulous a punctuality on scores of occasions. Moreover, he appeared in the same garb, with the same air, neither more sanguine nor more depressed; his appeal was not more ardent than before, nor was it more lukewarm. Yet that day—on the *first* day of the appointed week, before twelve, he received a sum of money, solid bullion, in part payment of his

account! The incident staggered him; and, as he made his exit, he paused an instant at the open door, and his eye turned upon the old servant with an uneasy and inquiring expression. He descended the steps with a downward look, as though, forgetful whether there were four or five, he might miss one; then, before he went his way, humming no air whatever, he turned one quick furtive glance up at the outside of the house which he had scanned a thousand times, and then his eye wandered to the archway of the door; perhaps some idea connected with a horseshoe might be in his mind at that moment. There was witchcraft in the event.

The Dun was for the first time thoughtful, it might almost be said. Strangeness is ever serious. That he should ever have walked away with any but an empty hand in his pocket! He could not make it out. Why had that money been paid to him? He could *not* see the motive. The circumstance disconcerted and unsettled him. What added materially to his bewilderment was, that before he could edge in the customary inquiry, "When shall I call again?" he had been desired to come on that day month before *two* o'clock! Were they then going to clear it off at that rate? He had never obtained so satisfactory an appointment before. It had a most significant look, and disturbed the serenity of mind which had grown with the non-success of years.

The day came, and with it the equally unfailing Dun. There was a touch of anxiety visible in his face. He had not the alacrity, the cheerfulness, the *confidence*, as we may say, that had characterized him before. He had something of the look of a disappointed man. Before *two*, the injunction said. But the Dun, well remembering his luck the last time, was there, knocker in hand, before twelve. Before twelve was before two,

et nullus error. The door opened, and lo! another symptom of gradual change in the establishment. The old servant was gone; there was a new face that knew not the Dun's. That he should live to stand there and not be recognised! So confused was he, that he required to be told twice that there was nobody at home. No matter, he would call again. "Would he leave his name?" That *his* name should not be known there! But mindful of a sound principle in such cases, he would not; he would call again. He called at one o'clock; the same answer, with the same question varied, "Would'nt he leave his name?" He returned at five minutes to *two*, and lingered till the clock struck, in vain. The Dun was perplexed, and for a few seconds could scarcely believe that the appointment was unkept, the pledge broken, and the old system renewed. Were it not for that strange payment a month ago, his feelings would have been perfectly tranquil, his soul content. But if that man turned not away unhappy never did Dun leave door with heaviness of heart.

In due season, however, he became composed. A regular succession of broken promises, not-at-homes, and out-of-towns, restored him, in the course of two or three years, to tranquillity. Meantime, what grand events were changing the destiny of the world! From the commencement of the Dun's career, Europe had been in convulsions. Empires had been won and lost, kings enchained and liberated, armies upon armies immolated; but the Dun had seen nothing, heard nothing, done nothing, but in the way of his calling. His soul had embraced no object of public or private interest, save the appointment he was to keep, and the money he was to apply for at No. 68. But now the greatest blow was to be struck, the final convulsion to be suffered. Yet what was the field of Waterloo to the Dun? Had

his way laid across it, on would he have marched, unconscious of impediment, to his appointment with his debtor. And it happened that about that time, when men's minds were in such a state of excitement that they knew not what they did, his debtor suddenly rewarded his perseverance by paying him another instalment. This was more exciting to him than a nation's triumph. Again was he taken by surprise, again disturbed. He felt his superstition return upon him, and regarded his success as an ill omen. What could it mean? It was a violation of the law of custom—custom which was emphatically his law; but again he became tranquillized by the regularity of the fruitless calls and hopeless reappointments that followed the payment.

The Dun now began to show signs of change. His dress grew shabbier, and its wearer grew visibly older. George IV. was king; yet the Dun came with a step so sure and regular, that the habit might have had its origin in the reign of George I. But anon he became grievously shabby; his hair was quite gray, and the rim of his worn hat was in a sad state from continually touching it to his debtor. The debtor, too, exhibited signs of age, being more frequently at home, but infinitely more irritable and obstinate. If the pertinacious Dun sent word up, in reply to a "let him call again," that he had come at the debtor's own time, the answer would be, that it was not the right time; and should he venture to ask the pertinent question, "what *was* the right time," the pertinent reply would promptly come, "there was *no* right time." Once, about the year 1829, the old debtor felt so worn out by the precision and the patience of his Dun, as to be, for a moment or so, almost provoked to pay him. Two years after that, his irritability and impatience of being dunned had increased so much, that he actually offered

to pay down the balance at once, if the rate of discount should be liberal and satisfactory. The Dun got an instalment that day.

Half London, so far as the Dun traversed it, had been pulled down; street after street was formed; the whole scene was changed; yet did he regularly find his way to the old house. Even that underwent the ordeal of reform; he no longer went up steps to it; the very knocker was not the same; yet there was he in all weathers, changed too, but the same in purpose. When was the Dun ever known to tire? He is indefatigable, inflexible. And during all the years that he had trodden that one road, so little had he in his purse, or seemed he to have, that nobody had ever picked his pocket. The smart promising debtors are robbed; the poor creditor passes, uncomplimented by a supposition of property.

One morning lately, the Dun traced his way, by appointment, to the old spot. He was not stricken sorely by time, yet he seemed bowed and weak; the hand that was raised to the knocker was lank and feeble, and the knock was faltering and tremulous. A new face came; but that was nothing; he had lived to become acquainted with many new ones, and he inquired as he had inquired in his youth —"Was he at home?" The answer was decisive; his debtor was in the grave. But the Dun was ushered in, his claim was demanded, the amount was verified, and the sum was paid. The Dun received his money! the balance in full! With what feelings, who can say? Certainly not with quiet nerves; for the signature which he that day affixed to the receipt required, is so blotted and indistinct, that it is impossible to trace the name. But he had the money, and with it, one hand buried in his pocket still, he passed from the threshold of the old house for the last time!

Ah! little knew they what they did when they paid him. Good meanings seem destined to be practical mischiefs. The debtor understood him best. That last act of justice destroyed him. It deprived him of his pursuit in life, of his motive for living. What should a Dun do when he is paid. "Where should Othello go," occupation being gone? A Dun has existence only while he has money to get in; to pay him all, to the last penny, taking his receipt in full, is to destroy the game, and leave the sportsman to load his gun for the joy of firing into the vacant air. Whose pursuits can be more absorbing, whose pleasure more intense, than the Dun's; take the habit of his lifetime away, you take his life also. True, he may lend money, induce some pitying friend to borrow a superfluous sum, and so proceed to the work of persecution, shaping himself out a path for the renewal of his bygone enterprises; but it is a sham enjoyment, a stratagem, which may be put an end to any morning by his friend's paying him the money; and this, however unlikely in itself, always seems probable to a friend.

The Dun, whose long career and placid character have thus been indicated, lived just long enough to prove an example of the fatal consequences of payment in full. (To instalments perhaps, if small and far between, there can be no insuperable objection.) He was seen some six or seven times within the three weeks following the day of settlement, hovering about the house, or gazing vacantly within its vicinity; and once he was heard to complain bitterly of the treatment he had experienced, after a life of arduous, regular, and patient visitation, in all seasons, and under serious obstructions; treatment which at once told him, without reserve or delicacy, that he must knock there no more, but find in his old age some other debtor. He

was never known to lose his temper until he began to dwell upon this theme. His mind rapidly gave way; it in vain sought somebody whom he could dun for even a trivial amount; and thus, the other day, having as usual strolled in the old direction, planted himself opposite the old house, and looking longingly at the knocker for several minutes, he crossed over for the last time, and sat himself down upon the steps; there where his feet had been so oft in his active and hopeful youth, there where the hollowed stone bore testimony to the constancy of his visits. He felt that he was at the Mecca where all the pilgrimages of his life had terminated, a shrine whence the spirit that attracted him had fled. A faintness came over him, and the hand that had involuntarily been raised, dropped by his side. He could not have knocked, had his debtor been within. The Dun found that he himself had a debt to pay; a debt unpostponable, payable on demand; and there, HE PAID IT.

A NOTE FROM THE GENTLEMAN WHO IS ASHAMED TO BE SEEN.

. . . . . Naturally nervous, shy, sensitive, fidgetty, I am at this moment so overwhelmed with shame, so bewildered in a maze of many horrors, that I seem to feel the want of a dictionary to help me to the few words necessary to the relation of my—simple—but—appalling story.

Perhaps the narrative is unnecessary. Perhaps all London is now laughing at my adventure. Here in my forlorn solitude, how should I know the subject of the club's scandal, the town's gossip? Am I that subject?

I can't go out to ascertain. I can see no friend. See! alas, can I ever be *seen!* Can I ever venture to be visible again?

Yes, I dare say the whole town is already talking of the affair; quizzing the hero of the tale; the absurd gentleman, who, in his abstractedness, in that state of mind in which a man thinks so deeply, that he's confoundedly thoughtless; by the oddest mistake, the most ridiculous but provoking blunder; absolutely cut off—psha! the absurdity goes beyond the absurd. And to do it with my eyes open, wide open, actually staring myself in the face all the time!

If the tale is to be told, let history have the right version. Concealment is out of the question, so I may as well confess. But the public's patience for a single moment—I will but make one inquiry, and then begin. . . . . Surely I rang that bell before. There's pull the second. That fellow Robert is afraid to enter the room, lest he should laugh outright as he looks at me. Oh, here he is. Well, Robert, what says Harris? what of the bear? Oh, he *is* killed, is he? That's all right. And I shall have some of the finest and purest quality? Very well, that'll do; now shut the door.

I could not proceed until that matter was fairly off my mind.

The reader may not have a very distinct recollection of my picture, which the artist and myself admired amazingly at Somerset House in the Exhibition before last. It was simply sent as the portrait of *a* gentleman. I shall be *the* gentleman next time. But whosoever observed that portrait must have especially remarked, there is no self-flattery in this, especially remarked the flowing curl of the hair, the graceful line of the whisker, the unexceptionable arch of the eye-brow. To object to the hue, I fancy, would be to condemn the glossy

black of the raven. There was no such effect in any other portrait in the Exhibition. In fact, the three hundred and seventy-two remaining gentlemen who published their heads that year were either gray or bald. If they would like to make an experiment, I can with pleasure accommodate all of them with some dye or balsam, some oil or essence, warranted infallible. Within these eight-and-forty hours I have been in communication with every hair-professor in town, and have a stock of inestimable compositions, sufficient to warrant me in opening an establishment upon a grand scale.

I speak of myself as being shy and sensitive; it is my evil fortune to be so; but being shy and sensitive is no reason why a man should be blind to his own whiskers, or shut his eyes to the eyebrows which he wore in his cradle. I may, without blushing, confess to a secret consciousness that in these respects Nature had singled me out for honour; that she who had given Solomon his wisdom, had given whiskers to me. I have no such consciousness of the possession of other advantages, if I have any. My eyes may be of any colour, dull or bright, for aught I can tell; my mouth—no, that is absolutely beyond my reach; but my hair, whatever strength I may possess, it certainly lies where Samson's did. Even at this moment, I cannot help consoling myself with the reflection—at this moment, when my hair, could the reader behold it! is almost standing on end. What is it that Chillon's prisoner says about "turning white in a single night?"

This consciousness, or, if the world will insist upon calling it so, this conceit, has cost me something. It is better to have a head of hair like a wiry terrier's and not know it, than hyacinthine locks and be ever cognizant of the distinction. It is better to be unthink-

ingly bare-cheeked, than to have a pair of whiskers perpetually rushing across your mind. Still, there is no gainsaying, in my case, the fact of their magnificence. I, who had an inkling of it before, was sure of it when the portrait appeared. I collected the opinions of many ladies of my acquaintance, about whose ideas upon such a subject it was impossible for a person of a sensitive turn of mind, like myself, to form a notion previously. I had originally a little doubt of the propriety of exhibiting the picture, having observed that people never call you ill-looking till your portrait is produced, and then, although the painter have made you as ugly as Snarley-yow himself, they will all swear that it's a flattering likeness. Such was not my fate; I listened anxiously for the sentiments of my acquaintances, especially of the fair circle. They all met at one point—at the point of my own ambition, my own conviction. Their exclamations were, one after one, not about the features, the expression, the contour, the general likeness, but "the curls are very like and quite natural," or "the whiskers are inimitable, and as black as life." Nay, to confirm this impression, I heard more than one person, total strangers to me, pointing to the picture as they passed it, say, "What a fine head—of hair!" I wished for no more; my object was attained.

Man, however, is a changeable animal, and that has often struck me to be the real reason why he never continues long in the same mind. I was always anxious and fidgetty, and the taste of one compliment made me sigh for another. The crop of raven curl, the sweep of unexceptionable whisker, these were triumphs; but the idea of another, a nobler darted one morning into my mind, and instantly fixed my imagination. The greatest was behind. The MOUSTACHE! Those who had sanctioned before would admire then, and those who had

already admired would double their notes of admiration. Yes, the idea of the moustache at once took possession of my soul. If it be true that—

"Beauty draws us by a single hair,"

what must be the attraction, I thought, of a myriad mustered on my upper lip! I mused complacently on the matter all the evening, and at night dreamt that I was Orson. Not dismayed by my dream, I resolved in the morning to preserve my upper lip sacred from the edge of the razor. I went out of town while the moustaches grew. They sprung up and flourished. I returned to London, and prepared myself, with some shyness and anxiety, for a sensation.

The first trial proved the fact, that it is better to let well alone. Nervous as I was, I could not but perceive that in form and colour *my* moustaches were miracles; but the military (I shall not hint why) made a dead set at them. They were perpetually being thrown in my teeth, and that is not particularly agreeable. My retiring and timid disposition did not contrast favourably with the fierceness of aspect I had suddenly acquired. People quizzed me with inquiries about my regiment. Instead of increasing the effect produced by my portrait, the moustache that was to work marvels for me diminished it. I overheard Colonel Badger, who had complimented me the day before on my becoming and tasteful acquisition, reply to the observation of his companion whose glance I had just felt to be levelled at me, "Yes, it 's a pity he doesn't shave, for the style of his hair is not near so frightful." I knew this was envy, but felt that the razor must be my resource.

The next morning I resolved to disappoint my quizzers, and strip them of their joke. I stood before the glass to take the last look at those remarkable natural

productions. It was impossible to help being affected. The act of removing them struck me as being, as far as it went, suicidal. "A sentence! come, prepare!" No, I couldn't execute it. The keen and shining instrument fell from my hands. Moustache was reprieved for that day.

On the next—that fatal day!—I awoke full of the recollection of the "looks and tones," the hints and shrugs, the significant whispers and the sudden "hushes," of which, at a party the night before, I could not avoid believing myself the object. The joke, I saw, was against me. I was of a peaceful and sensitive turn of mind, and my new military assumption would suggest merry associations. My acquaintances, in spite of any confidence I might contrive to acquire, in spite even of a swagger or a stare, if I could compass such an achievement, would insist upon regarding me as a dove that had borrowed a vulture's beak. I sighed heavily as I admitted to myself that the moustaches must be given up. They must be taken off to save myself from the same fate. I had another party to attend at night. Well, night would be time enough for the stroke.

I again stood before the glass. I experienced the feeling of one who was called upon to offer up a great sacrifice on the altar of society. I was impressed with the conviction that the grave duty had devolved upon me of tranquillising the public mind, and performing an act of heroic and generous self-devotion. I comprehended the full force of the sensations that might shake the soul of a great landed proprietor on being, by a stroke of inevitable fate, compelled to cut down a noble forest, under the shade of whose melancholy boughs he had not lost and neglected the creeping hours of time. But the axe must be laid to the root; the weapon was sharp

and at hand. It was in vain to gaze and lament; agitation in the army must be prevented at any sacrifice. Yet such moustaches! I felt that a vainer man, a mere coxcomb, would clip them off with care and send them under a glass-shade to the British Museum. The longer I gazed the more insupportable was the reflection. My hand, obeying a sudden and violent impulse of my nature, upraised the shining and irresistible steel. It was better tempered than I was; but the hand did not shake; it was the trembling of the soul. I applied the sharpened edge to the sentenced lip. *I saw what I was doing, yet I knew not what I did.* A minute more, my hand was removed; I looked, and beheld the moustaches no longer. I had played the part of the blind Fury, and had "slit their thin-spun life." They lay before me, as it seemed to my aching sight, cut off in their flower. They looked more black and curling than before. That was a natural reflection of the fox, when he walked along the whole length of the prostrate tree that had been blown down in the night—"What a noble tree! I never thought it so tall while standing."

Composure succeeded to the act of sacrifice. I returned, in tolerable calmness, to the glass from which I had retreated, to view the aspect which had thus suffered a "sea-change," to gaze on the scene of departed glory; to look, as it were, on the site of Troy. The first glance startled me; I scarcely knew myself. How altered, how strange! how surprisingly altered, and how perplexingly strange! Who that had seen me an hour before would guess me to be the same person! It was very odd. I was, however, quite sure of my own identity, and must be satisfied. Still it was mysterious that the being accustomed for three months to moustaches should make me not only a stranger in my

own eyes, but a very droll-looking stranger; quite grotesque. I looked, and looked. But it was getting late, and there was no time for further musing. To my party I went.

Although the cause of joke was thus for ever removed, I was not less nervous than I had been the night before; not at all: and it soon appeared that I had no reason to be. The first person I saw on entering fixed upon me a look which I never shall forget; there was in her expression an unaccountable mixture of the ludicrous and the piteous. My lovely and gentle-hearted hostess, how kind it was of yôu to stifle your natural laugh until I had turned away! I passed on to another friend; his look said, as intensely as ever Macready's lips did, "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" Another, and another, and another; all with characteristic variations of the same surprise, the same uncontrollable disposition to laugh;—the same; yes, there was no mistake; the same touch of pity softening and subduing the emotion. I blushed, until I felt my cheek absolutely singeing the small curls of my whisker. I fidgetted and zigzagged my way to the next glass, perfectly bewildered and confounded. All eyes were upon me, yet I did contrive to snatch a momentary look. "Very strange!" was my internal and most uncomfortable ejaculation; "I shouldn't know myself, and yet cannot conceive what is the matter with me."

At this moment my friend the Colonel crossed the room, and joined me. There was no tincture of ridicule in the solemnity of his face.

"My dear fellow," whispered he, "what on earth has crazed a creature of your quiet habits? How the devil came you to shave them off? You 're mad!"

"Not mad," I stammered, "but a little mystified by

the honour of being stared at by the whole room. The fact is, I took them off, partly because you quizzed me for mounting them; and, to own the truth, I have no right to moustaches: plain sober fellows of my sort might just as reasonably take to red coats."

"Moustaches!" exclaimed my companion, with a look of increased wonderment and concern, in a tone that seemed to imply a conviction that I had lost my senses.

"Yes," I replied, striving to assume an air of ease and indifference; "it was my whim to be a puppy, and it is now my whim to be myself again; I chose to mount them, and I have chosen to remove them."

"*Have you!*" was his emphatic, deeply whispered, and final exclamation. There was a volume of wonder in it. It clearly told me *I had not.*

Another glance over my shoulder at the brilliantly lighted mirror; one short, shuddering glance; it was enough. My eyes were now opened; nothing could be more visible; a doubt was an impossibility. There, indeed, were the mysterious moustaches, black as night. There they were; yet I had seen myself cut them off! I felt them rising up on my lip with horror. I lived a whole year of agony in that instant. What then had I done? To what part of my face had my perturbed spirit directed the keen-edged engine of separation? One little movement of my now really opened eyes at once informed me, MY EYEBROWS WERE GONE!

With them has gone, for this season at least, Othello's occupation.

THE PERPLEXITY OF A DEAF GENTLEMAN.

'—— I know his trumpet."—OTHELLO.

"ALLOW me to ask," said Mr. Brown, covering with his lips the mouth of the deaf gentleman's speckled snake-looking ear-pipe, and sending a volley of sharp-sounds into it that might have filled the Thames-tunnel; "allow me to ask if you can hear *your own* voice in conversation?"

The deaf gentleman was posed. He looked out cogitatively at the corners of his eyes, in a manner that plainly said, "I can't say I can," or in other words, "I wish I could."

We all wished the same. Our friend the deaf gentleman is one of the best of creatures, who never uttered a word to wound anybody; who never talks but in the kindliest key; who has a silver voice that winds its way into the heart; and one felt it doubly hard that tones so pleasant to others should be mute to himself. It was affecting to think that the first and dearest happiness in life was denied to him; he couldn't hear himself speak.

"I don't know," said the deaf gentleman, bewildered by the intensity of a natural wish to hear his own voice; "I am not quite sure; sometimes I half fancy that I can. I seem to catch a sentence at intervals; a few straggling words, perhaps, that have lost their way, and got into my ear-pipe by accident."

Brown is a cruel wag. He wouldn't let the deaf gentleman enjoy his delusion. "My dear sir," rejoined he, as he again applied his mouth to the tube, and poured into it a sound, the sharpness of which appeared

to be subdued by a feeling of real concern and commiseration; my dear sir, you must be mistaken. It is impossible that you can ever *hear* what you say, or you'd never give utterance in any company to those shocking things that sometimes escape you!"

The deaf gentleman turned pale. One end of the pipe dropped from his ear, the instant Brown dropped the other extremity. A new light had broken in upon him, or rather a new source of gloom and obscurity was mercilessly opened up. He couldn't hear the words he uttered; how could he tell *what* words he uttered? He always knew what he meant to say; he could never know what he really said! Amidst all his nervousness and despondency, the doubt, the difficulty, the danger in which he stood, had never suggested itself before. Brown, however, was joking; and the deaf gentleman, seeing others laugh, tried to laugh too; "shifted his trumpet" into his coat pocket; "took snuff," like Sir Joshua, and then his hat. His "good morning" was as bland and silver-toned as usual, but having uttered these two common words, he coloured up to the eyes, looked confused and perplexed, and disappeared hastily. As he shut the door, I shouted out that I would call upon him in the evening; but a promise shot from Perkins's steam gun would not have hit the deaf gentleman's ear at two yards' distance.

He went home (as I afterwards learned) to a solitary dinner, instead of dining at the club, as he had intended. The hint thrown out touching this new feature of his deafness had induced him to change his mind, and to avoid company until he had had a little self-communion. He took three extra glasses of Madeira without washing down the obstinate doubt that threatened to become an impediment to his ever speaking again with any confidence or comfort.

Naturally fond of music, which he could have enjoyed at all hours but for the single drawback of not being able to hear a note, he resorted for solace to his music-book, and began to read. The effort was unsuccessful; a solitary crotchet, harsh and horrid, having taken possession of his mind. He drew his chair to the fire, and endeavoured to divert himself by seeing the tea-kettle sing. His blood began to boil too. He knew there was a singing sound issuing from the kettle; but what sound? The air might be "Drops of Brandy," or it might be "Allan Water," for aught he could tell.

It became clearer to him, the more he reflected, that the theory of the human will was rank nonsense. It was his will to hear the song of the hot-water nymph in the kettle, but not a note struck upon his tympanum. It was his will in like manner to utter certain words agreeably to a preconceived idea; but *did* he utter them? Might not the idea be a false conception? Failing to hear, he felt that he couldn't be quite sure that he spoke at all; still less certain was he that the intended words were the words spoken. Meaning to speak, and speaking, could not be exactly the same thing, it was clear. All his experience told him, all his information of the course of human life went to prove, that people are continually saying and doing things the very opposites of their intentions. Aiming at pigeons and killing crows is the leading characteristic of mankind. It has been so, it is so, and it will be so. Could he flatter himself that he was exempt from the common infirmity? Could he be very, very positive, in the absence of auricular testimony, that when he had made up his mind to express a courteous and grateful feeling in the ordinary terms, such as "I am much obliged," he was not liable to say instead—it might so happen—"You

be ——," without discovering the mistake, or having a chance of apologising?

"I had no idea of doing it;" "I did not know what I was doing;" "I intended to have done the very reverse;" these are household words, heard at all times and everywhere, so frequently, as to show that neither man nor pig should be confident that he is not travelling to Cork when he thinks he is going to Fermoy. It is the case with what we say as with what we do. Nothing is so proverbially common as assurances of friendship, professions of admiration, and declarations of patriotism, spoken but not meant. Where is the nice line between design and accident in all this to be drawn? Much of it may be wilful, but more probably is inadvertent. "What I really meant to say was," is not more a stock phrase in the House of Commons than elsewhere. The deaf gentleman turned all this over in his mind, and felt all the horror of the hazard he must run, should he ever again venture to attempt the utterance of a single word. Other people could correct, explain, recall; it must be his fate to speak at random, and to expose himself and his audience to the most dreadful risks. To speak and not hear was to walk on a precipice and not see. To use that awful weapon the tongue without being certain of its sayings, was worse than flourishing about a drawn sword in the dark. The deaf gentleman felt that he was in duty bound to be dumb.

He began to review the past. Yesterday turned back its head over its shoulder, and stared him in the face, smiling grimly. Only yesterday he had parted with his housekeeper. She had been his faithful, middle-aged handmaid for some years; and was brimful, to the pocket-hole, of all estimable qualities. She had lungs beyond her sex; her voice was *never* "soft, gentle, and low,—an excellent thing in woman" when attendant

upon a deaf gentleman. She left him to better her condition, that is, to be married to a schoolmaster, whose voice was beginning to fail him when the boys wanted bullying. He remembered all she had said at parting, but not a word of his own replies. She seemed to mingle reproaches, delicate, but still decided reproaches, with her tender adieus. She could not possibly have intended to insinuate that he might have prevented that painful parting by marrying her himself. No, she was quite another kind of woman. He was distressed at the time; but he did not then see the cause of her reproof. He had blundered out unmeant words; he had aimed at wishing her happy, and, as talking was mere guess work to him, he had probably wished her at ——. That faithful, and sensitive, and tender handmaid, how must she have been grieved! Soured for life, perhaps. He pitied the schoolmaster.

More bitter still was the reflection with which he dwelt upon the recent defeat of all his hopes of putting an end to his bachelorship. When his housekeeper gave him warning, he resolved to take warning; and at once "pop the question" to a fair lady, who, loving the sound of her own voice, had long delighted him by talking loud nothings through his pipe. He popped; but his, alas, were rejected addresses! The shepherd and his pipe were cast off by the cruel fair. Why? he now asked himself. My Lady Tongue would never have refused a gentleman for being deaf; no, that was the one great advantage, she would have the talk to herself. The truth was clear, he had popped a wrong question of some sort or other, and who could tell its tendency? Perhaps he had implored her to relieve his anxiety as to the real state of her—age; perhaps he had popped a question as to the authenticity of her eyebrows; or entreated her, in his fervour, to bless him with a solu-

tion of the mystery appertaining to those half-dozen teeth of hers, which, he could not help remarking, had made their appearance in front, one by one, with the celerity of tombstones in a Sierra Leone churchyard. This, or something worse, he must have done; and thus he had driven her into a deliberate deafness, more intense than his own, if there be any truth in the proverb. She had left him without pity, to "pipe his eye," as well as his ear, for the sad remainder of a speechless life.

He extended his review of his past existence: he proceeded to count up the number of his friends (few men have so many), to muster his acquaintances in his memory; to call, in idea, a great public meeting of all the persons to whom he had ever spoken a syllable in his life, gentle and simple, old and young, great nobles and pretty nursemaids. The congregation was immense, and, as in a crowd at an execution, the females preponderated. His mind's eye wandered over the mob, and dropt an imaginary tear. How many of that vast assemblage might he not have shamefully, though innocently, insulted! He had conversed more or less with every one; he had not heard a single syllable of all that he had addressed to them; and what language might he not have employed; how many might have silently pronounced him a savage; how many more a madman! His heart acquitted him of all intention to hurt the feelings of the most worthless of the monstrous group; yet what thousands might he have shocked, pained, by phraseology "over which he had no control." His fancy contemplated the whole motley crowd as a collection of injured angels. He stood a culprit at the bar of his imagination; and being his own judge and jury, clearly convicted himself of divers unknown offences. In the front of the grand gathering of his

victims, his eye detected the three or four of us whom he had casually met in the morning. We were the last who had ever heard him articulate a word. He began to wonder what he had said to us: he thought of the parting expression which he had used, which he had meant to use rather, the only words he had uttered out of doors since he had been awakened to a consciousness of his responsibility—a sense of his awful situation! He meant to say "good morning;" but how, in his uncertainty, could he help feeling a renewal of the nervous sensation, the delicacy of alarm, which he had experienced the instant he had spoken. There was no remedy for the evil, no end to this agonizing anxiety, save in the philosophical course adopted by Iago—"From this time forth I never will speak a word."

The deaf gentleman took from his pocket his ear-pipe, that he might try his own voice on his own tympanum. The action suggested to him the possibility of carrying about with him a second convenience. He had another coat pocket; might it not be appropriated to the reception of a speaking-trumpet—a pipe to talk through, so that he might really hear his own conversation, and know what he was saying. It would be rather noisy in company, but it would be making sure of sound. The idea put a new life into his heart; excitement and depression began to struggle for the mastery; the confusion in his mind became worse confounded. It was at this moment that I arrived at his chambers, making my threatened evening call. I opened the door, of course, without the superfluity of a tap, which would be as inaudible to him as the knocking was to Duncan. The deaf gentleman, however, in the refinement of his courtesy, the instant he gets a glimpse of you at the partially opened door, always invites you forward, with a "COME IN," by way of

response to your supposed ceremonious tap. Now "come in" was intended to have come out on my behalf; but the deaf gentleman was confused and perplexed; the man who much dreads doing a deed, will certainly do it at last (this, by the way, is the moral I was endeavouring to work out); he who fears he shall say what he shouldn't, will be sure to say it in the end (this may sound precisely like the truth, yet it is true); and thus, in his confusion and perplexity, he started from his reverie upon his legs, and almost stunned me with the thundering salutation of—"BE OFF."

A PASSAGE IN THE LIFE OF ORLANDO SCRUBB.

"He was (could he help it?) a special attorney."
GOLDSMITH'S *Retaliation.*

MANY years ago, say three-quarters of a century, Dick Scrubb (the name that clung to him from his cradle) was an ill-favoured, ricketty, hopeless urchin, without a friend, in the parish-school at Limehouse. Last year, his mortal remains were removed from his splendid mansion in the most distinguished part of the west of London, and deposited with all possible funereal pomp in the family vault at Screwham. But he was Dick Scrubb still; or he was, at least, until that eventful moment when, as if Scrubb should separate from Dick, soul finally parted from the body.

Mr. Scrubb's life, his "Life and Times" perhaps, must be written hereafter; a single incident is all that can be related now. It will supply a guiding light to the future biographer; it will exhibit to the world the model for lawyers, a pattern-attorney.

As soon as the parish authorities could relieve themselves from the charge of Dick, they crowned their parochial philanthropy by putting him out as a junior fag in the office of a rising lawyer in that neighbourhood, who had lately wormed his way into a share of the vestry business, and was even then, as people conjectured, looking up to the dignity of the vestry-clerkship. Mr. Richard Winks declared that he was solely influenced by charitable motives in taking such a boy upon his "establishment;" but the truth was that Dick's peculiarly repulsive countenance was positively attractive in the eyes of Winks, who fancied he could detect therein a look of cunning and a coolness of purpose that might render the lad a drudge of no little utility, to be had at a cheap rate.

Into the first mysteries of an attorney's office was he therefore initiated; that is to say, he swept the floor, dusted the desk, and filled the coal-skuttle whenever, in the extremity of the cold season, a fire was allowed. By degrees, he ascended to a higher scale of duties, and every vestige of the charity-boy disappeared as he rose. The muffin-cap was first discarded, and Dick went forth "in very presence of the regal sun," with a real hat on his head; the coat of a past generation was substituted by a garment of a newer cut and soberer colour; and every other remnant of the barbarous costume of benevolence disappeared in due season.

This change was the result of the trifle per week which Mr. Winks now awarded him, in payment of his assiduity in posting backwards and forwards between the courts of law, in filling up blank forms, and arranging letters in pigeon-holes. From pouncing parchment, Dick's genius was advanced to the engrossing of it; he lost the title of errand-boy with the duties, as he escaped the appearance of a charity-lad with the dress;

and at seventeen he blazed forth all over Limehouse, an acknowledged and undeniable attorney's-clerk. He would now creep into the quietest corner of a public-house parlour one or two evenings a week, and hear the little tradesmen of that district discuss the doings of great men; by which means he learned who Alderman Wilkes was, and came to have an opinion concerning my Lord North. After another year or two, still "progressing" in the law, he came out more boldly, and among the respectable tradespeople at the King's Arms, hazarded his sentiments over a measure of small ale (for he could afford no costlier beverage) in a more confident voice; so that those who remembered Dick as an inmate of the parish school, would yet tolerate his company out of the consideration due to his attainments, remarking that learning was a fine thing, and charity no disgrace, not it.

Mr. Scrubb even then could certainly have afforded to indulge himself with richer and more abundant potations than those above specified, had it not been for certain costs to which he was put in the embellishment of his person. On this point he was particularly scrupulous. Not that he was ever foppishly, on the contrary, he was respectably attired; singularly ugly, and awkwardly put together, he contrived to obviate these disadvantages, so that Mr. Winks's clients, instead of exclaiming, "What a fright that scrub of a clerk is!" would be very apt to declare, that the young man looked quite as much of a gentleman as Mr. Winks himself.

And such was the impression beginning to prevail in the parlour of the King's Arms, whither Dick repaired to take his supper of toasted cheese, and such hop-flavoured fluids as his funds would afford; when one night, after he had been holding forth more eloquently

than usual on the policy of the American war, and proving to the satisfaction of everybody that government could be carried on without any taxation at all in this country, simply by making the colonies pay for the honour of their connexion with it; to all which the lively landlady (a widow), as she sat in the bar opening into the parlour, had been listening with marked interest and curiosity. After this had taken place, and after the company had knocked the ashes out of their last pipes, and retired, it was noticed that Dick did not retire also. It was whispered indeed that he sat up for two hours after the house had been closed for the night, sipping punch with the landlady in the bar, and conversing with extreme earnestness, but in a much lower key than before.

All that was positively known however was, that Mr. Scrubb never from that night ordered the same cheap, meagre, watery potations, which had before sufficed to inspire his disquisitions on the doings of my Lord Chatham, and my Lord Rockingham, or the sayings of Junius and Mr. Wilkes. On the contrary, if he called for ale, it was the oldest and strongest, and he would take with it for his supper a choice delicacy from the larder, the speedy presence of which he commanded with a simple "See what you can do for me to-night." Quick following upon his repast, would come two, perhaps three, supplies of punch, mixed by the widow's own hand, which was acknowledged to be the most dexterous in the whole parish; and all this time perhaps Dick might be seen settled in the favourite seat by the fire, which the churchwarden once monopolized, stretching his legs out upon the fender, like a man who feels himself at home, and flatly contradicting Hickson, the rich hop-factor, in his theory of protective duties, or his notions on corn and the currency; and this he

did with the air of one who esteems himself at least as important as the best man in company.

Jokes about the sudden freedom of his manners, and the great length to which his score at the widow's must be running, would fly about at first, but they soon ceased. Indeed, if he seemed resolved to forget that he had figured all over that neighbourhood in parish costume, others were resolved to forget it too, and Dick Scrubb was no longer his appellation, at least in his presence. There was somehow about him a sense of the "Orlando" which communicated itself to his companions, and they would as soon have presumed to designate Mr. Richard Winks, Dick Winks.

But no man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre, and perhaps no clerk is a gentleman in the eye of his employer, the attorney. Mr. Winks, to whom these stolen marches in life on the part of Scrubb were perfect secrets, who never entered the King's Arms, and was unconscious of the popularity of his clerk, only knew that he had taken him some years before off the hands of the parish, trained, fed and clothed him, worked him up into an expert errand-boy, transformed him into a capital clerk, and, in short, strained, screwed, and twisted him into something like a gentlemanly-looking limb of the law. He considered him to be just as dependent now as when he wore the muffin-cap of charity on the side of his cropped head; the clerk was, in the attorney's regard, quite as much the attorney's private property as the pony on which he rode night and morning to his country-house at Bow.

What then was his amazement when, one day Dick entered the warm carpetted room at the back of the high-desked, dirty, fireless nook of an office, and after some mysterious flourishes announced his intention of resigning; literally, of resigning his seat on that stool,

the leather whereof, whole when he first mounted it, now discovered a liberal proportion of the straw that stuffed it. Mr. Winks was breathless when he found out his clerk's real meaning. While Dick's preparatory flourish was going on, relative to the length of time he had served, and the legal knowledge he had acquired under the direction of his kind instructor, the attorney was settling in his mind how to avoid compliance with the naturally anticipated demand for an increase of salary; he had not consequently one word to say when Dick ended with, "And so, sir, I have resolved to quit my post in your office, and set up in business for myself!" It was as though a powder-monkey had gone to Lord Howe, declining to do any more dirty work, and announcing his intention of turning conqueror, and taking the command of the fleet.

Dick took advantage of the breathlessness of his listener to proceed with extreme coolness and complacency, saying, that "He saw an opportunity of rising in the world, which it would be base and criminal in him to miss; that he had taken the necessary steps, and hoped very soon to be admitted as an attorney-at-law; that in the meantime he should carry on his business in the name of the eminent solicitors, Nisi and Prius of Eastcheap, and hoped for Mr. Winks's friendship in private life, although professionally they might be rivals."

The rage of Mr. Winks found vent at last with a violence which, as Mr. Scrubb observed, no gentleman could stay to listen to. A deep indentation, and a black stain, spreading in streams and splashes all over the inner door of the attorney's office, marked for a long time after the discharge of a pewter inkstand, which followed, and only just followed, the exit of the self-emancipated clerk. The fit of rage at the ingrati-

tude and assurance of Mr. Scrubb was renewed ere that week expired; intelligence being brought in, that on either door-post of a neat and newly painted house, in the same street, a few steps lower down, had that morning been displayed a brass-plate of considerable dimensions, on which was engraved these words, "Mr. Orlando Scrubb's offices."

It was all very well to wonder where Mr. Scrubb got the money; to insinuate that the widow was his friend; that the young lawyer's funds came from "the bar," and that he belonged to one "Inn" already. They could not rail his name off the door-posts. There was "Orlando Scrubb's offices" on two brass-plates, and there was he also, getting on as rapidly as Nisi and Prius themselves. What was worse for Mr. Winks, Scrubb, acquainted with all his secrets, and knowing all his connexions, came in at once for a large slice of the business, and was hourly working for more of it. Fierce was the war of the lawyers; bitter the abuse which the elder heaped on the younger for endeavouring to undermine his connexions, and poaching on the manor where he had been employed as keeper; and loud the complaints of injured innocence in the person of the younger, whom his late employer, ungrateful for years of service wholly unremunerated, was hourly seeking to ruin.

A year had thus elapsed, when Messrs. Somebody, the eminent brewers of that day, suddenly became bankrupts. Now it happened that Messrs. Somebody had supplied the widow's house with beer, and it happened too that through the interest of somebody else Scrubb was appointed solicitor to the estate.

A job of that nature was a much greater catch then than it is under the modern system; besides, the brewers were no ordinary bankrupts. It was an im-

mense start for Scrubb; it was a certain fortune to a young man, and Winks of course went wild. Scrubb was ten times the scoundrel he was before, and war to the knife was the word. The parish badge, the muffin-cap and yellow leathers were revived; all the ingratitude, all the treachery of the affair was explained to every new comer; and sneers and cries of shame were lavished upon Scrubb wherever his late patron's influence extended. Scrubb, however, was not thin-skinned; he went on working his commission like a man unconscious of molestation or insult, when, one summer morning, to the surprise of every shopkeeper round about, in he walked, into the old office of his old patron, Mr. Richard Winks, and asked if that gentleman were within!

The first explosion past, "I confess," said Scrubb, "that I have been inconsiderate, nay, I will own unjust to you."

"Unjust!" interrupted Mr. Winks. "Did I not take you, a ricketty little scrap of a boy, off the hands of the parish; strip you immediately of the disgraceful garb I found you in—the breeches were dirty yellow, I remember, and the coat a ditch-green; and didn't I rig you out in finery like the son of the Lord Chancellor; did'nt I supply you with money to spend your nights in taverns, and cram into you all day as much law as I had myself, only you've forgotten every letter of it; and then didn't you, just when you were beginning to be of use to me, start up in opposition almost next door, trading in my name, using up my tricks, laying down my traps, and inveigling away my clients under my very eyes. Unjust! Why you are the most unjust, ungrateful—"

"No: no," said Orlando, with firmness, and with a touch of strong feeling in his accent, "I am not un-

grateful. I wish to show that I *do* remember what I owe to your patronage and your instructions. I wish to be at peace, and came with the view—"

"What, juggle now!" again interrupted Mr. Winks; "it won't do; you can utter no word of apology that I will accept."

"I don't come with words; my acts shall speak. You are aware, Mr. Winks, that I am working the commission of bankruptcy in the important case—"

"I know; the brewers!" said Mr. Winks with bitterness, "and I have no doubt will squeeze out your thousands, where an honest solicitor would be satisfied with his mere hundreds!" And the lawyer's looks plainly declared that honesty was not the pleasanter policy of the two.

"The same, sir," returned Scrubb. "Now it is of that commission I would speak. It is an immense firm, and the interests at stake are enormous. I am not experienced, and hardly feel myself, just yet, quite equal to it; I am not rich, and it may involve perhaps a larger outlay of cash in the working, perhaps a little larger outlay, than I can conveniently draw from other business. Now then, sir, for my conditions of peace, and my proof that I'm not utterly ungrateful. This great commission I will make over to you; this sacrifice I incur for your friendship. Reimburse me any trifling expenses I have incurred up to this time, and I at once substitute your name for mine, and hand you over the documents. Am I ungrateful?

Mr. Winks, having rubbed his eyes, proceeded to rub his hands; he rubbed them again, and then thrust them into the farthest extremity of his huge waistcoat-pockets. He then took them out, and seized one of Mr. Orlando Scrubb's, exclaiming, "Dick, my dear boy, I have wronged you. You have some noble feelings,

and can indeed make a generous return. We are friends for life, even if we are doomed to be rivals!" And for a minute it seemed more than probable that Mr. Winks would drop a tear, or tears.

A few hours sufficed for the completion of the contract. Mr. Richard Winks was placed, with respect to the estate of the great bankrupts, exactly in the position of Mr. Orlando Scrubb; and the latter gentleman received from his friend a draft for two hundred and sixty pounds which (as per vouchers delivered) he had expended in working the commission.

The brewers were supposed, previous to their failure, to be enormously wealthy; and when they stopped, which was the result of an accident, everybody was certain that they would pay fifteen shillings in the pound. But the new solicitor speedily discovered what the old one had discovered first. The secret was startling, incredible, yet it was true; that there would not be a sufficient return to the bankrupts' estate to pay the costs of working the commission! and he had paid two hundred and sixty pounds to the self-sacrificing solicitor who had found it out before him!

More than half a century elapsed before these two attorneys spoke to each other again. They were neighbours all this time; they filled offices in the same county; they both prospered, amassing large fortunes. They transacted legal and other business together by deputy, or letter, but they never spoke; until, a few years since, at some parish meeting of trustees or commissioners, two white-headed and infirm old men, whose lives had been one feverish tumult, one restless race for a prize that brought no recompence, who stood now tottering on the edge of the grave, too weak either to support or to injure one another, agreed to shake hands and part in peace; burying in the forgiveness of a

moment all memory of the past. The past! Their existence was even then, the past. Reconciliation only came when their lives had no future.

THE POOR DEVIL.

It was in a dream, a vision generated during an after-dinner doze by the fireside, that a many-faced portrait presented itself to my eyes.

Through his torn and scanty garments pierced the raw wind of a night in February. The rain, too, had done its work, and he seemed cut to the heart with cold. Weariness and hunger, added to his helplessness; so that he crept along close to the wall at a very slow pace, and turning down a miserable alley in the meanest part of the town, he stopped at an old creaking house, the door of which stood open, and descended by three or four steps into a dark passage, that looked like a grave. Along this he groped his way to a narrow staircase, up which he dragged his limbs with difficulty to the top, where a garret, whose broken casement, lately repaired with paper, admitted the wind that now fairly rocked the rickety tenement, received its weekly hirer.

Here a feeble light was, after many fruitless efforts, procured, and the shattered panes being presently stopped up, so as partially to exclude the blast, its dull rays flicked on the bare discoloured walls of the sloping-roofed chamber, disclosing its empty fireplace, and its low comfortless bed in one corner, covered with a blanket. On a shelf in another corner, were some stale fragments of a meal; and to these, seating himself at a table beside the fireless grate, the weary and famished wanderer (at length *at home*) applied himself, in a manner

indicating that there was nothing unusual in the scantiness of the fare, and the chilling misery of the scene. Soaked to the skin, solitary and desolate, his face, although expressive enough of physical want and wretchedness, evinced no sense of any suffering not frequently experienced.

The dry, cold repast finished, his wet clothes were thrown off, and merciful sleep snatched him from the loathsome realities of his condition, wrapping him in a welcome oblivion. But before daybreak, long before, the same wet clothes were resumed, and he crept in pitch darkness down the stairs, still slippery with the mud of yesterday, to commence another dismal day of drudgery, hardship, and contumely, for a pittance that barely sufficed to keep the little flame of life which yet lent a ghastly light to his eyes, from going out altogether.

And the next day, and the next, from winter to winter, year after year, as from infancy to midlife it had been, it was the same. His had been one unvarying round of low grovelling care, and hopeless penury.

In youth, without a spark of energy, without one throb of honourable ambition, with no spur, save that of sharp hunger, to urge him forward, he had crawled on when compelled, and had received the cuffs of the world with a patience that looked at last like indifference. He could say nothing, he could do nothing in return. He was a wight whom everybody put upon, because he knew so well how to bear. No ill-usage came amiss to him. So far from having spirit to resent a blow, he took it as a portion of his destiny, against which it were vain to struggle. He seemed by his very impotence and pitifulness to have a right to be despised.

The only touch of tenderness ever mingled with the rough knocks and insults allotted to him by his fellow-

mortals, came now and then in a kind of scornful pity, expressed in the exclamation, "Poor devil!"—a touch of tenderness not unaccompanied, perhaps, by a half good-natured, half-treacherous kick.

As he became more and more imbecile and spiritless, his patience became more dogged, and the cuffs and crosses severer. Extra service was extracted from him by his task-master for less money; every mile he was set trudging, grew into a mile and a half; and the heavy burdens doubled themselves on his drooping shoulders; yet he was expected to be back sooner than ever.

"Wretch! do you take an hour to walk four miles, carrying only two hundred weight!"

All felt that they had a prescriptive right to oppress him, because oppression was a thing he was used to. He expected it. But it was not alone intentional insult and ill-usage that weighed him down, and made his forty years three-score and ten; Ill-luck ever delighted to attend upon him. Fate, as well as his fellow-men, seemed to conspire against him. In his passage through the crowd of life, the pitiless storm was ever in his teeth; and as if this were not enough, he was always doomed to catch the drippings of other people's umbrellas.

He had no relative, no friend in the world; he never had a friend indeed, except one—a poor fellow who was hanged "innocent;" and a dog who was killed by the neighbours, because, being playful, it was said to be rabid. He had his weak brain frightfully injured by a blow intended for another person; was crippled in constitution by the conspiracy of two physicians and an apothecary, treating him for a complaint he never had; and was once wrongfully accused of stealing six guineas and a half, found on his person, that being the largest

sum he ever had of his own in all his days. It was nobly expended in proving that he had come honestly by it.

He had been pumped upon, both by design and by mistake; been called dog, and had dogs set on him; he was always thrust from the wall, whether he walked north or south; he had been plundered, cheated, and trampled on: and, to complete the catalogue of grievances, there was always something in his sorrows almost ridiculous; something in his wrongs that half-reconciled the beholder to them, if it did not tempt him to make an addition to the stock.

As he again passed by, on his daily round, mud-bedabbled, spiritless, despised, shivering in the wind, sore of foot, and without energy to ward off even the flying snow-ball (type of the cold, if not crushing insults to which he was ever exposed), he appeared to be utterly at the mercy of the meanest thing the world contains, and the exclamation involuntarily rose to my lips—it seemed the only fitting one—"Poor devil!"

The miserable figure was immediately lost in the grandeur of an object that now appeared at a little distance; its aspect radiant, its head reaching the skies, and its arms extending over both hemispheres. On a nearer view, it turned out to be only a plain-looking gentleman, about the usual height, making a speech to three or four hundred equally plain-looking gentlemen, who, as legislators, were responding to his loud tones and energetic gesticulations with vehement shouts of approbation or dissent.

He was nobly born, bearing a name that had been famous for many generations; he was immensely rich, and possessed the finest horses, the costliest pictures, the rarest books, the choicest wines, the noblest houses, the broadest lands, in the country. He had a cultivated

taste, extensive learning, and continual health to enjoy all these. He was surrounded by every domestic tie that could unite him to happiness now, and administer to his pleasure and dignity in later age. He ever had, from his cradle, a combination of circumstances working around him to ensure apparently his peace and felicity, such as are read of but in romances, and witnessed but in dreams; and he seemed to have been sent on earth to show with what a multitude of enviable endowments fortune could invest her favourite.

Yet for any share he had in the luxuries of life, though he had an ardent relish of them, he might as well have taken unfurnished lodgings in a hermit's cell; for any enjoyment of his horses he might as well have been the statue of Charing-cross; for any pride and delight in his pictures he might as well have been blind; as for his rare and beautiful editions of the most glorious productions of genius and learning, he never saw their insides—never opening a book except "Hansard's Debates," or the report of a parliamentary committee.

Tenderly attached to his wife, he scarcely ever saw her awake, except at a very hasty meal now and then, when his mind was so occupied that he was almost unconscious of her presence; being at the same time, and for the same reason, unable to decide, if he had been asked the question, whether he was eating beef or chicken.

As for his little darlings, although he was naturally the fondest father in the world, they rarely crossed his path, except now and then as he was rushing down stairs to go out; and if he could just find time to give them a pat on the head, with a kiss each on Sundays, his overflowing affection was obliged to be content. He certainly did promise himself, year after year, the

fatherly delight of taking them all to see the pantomime; he anticipated the innocent and exquisite glee which must necessarily fill his heart while watching their little rosy laughing faces; but as for fulfilling the fond promise, and enjoying the bliss in reality, harlequin's wand itself could work no such wonder.

When the shooting season came, he could only "wish it were possible to spare a day," and live in hope of leisure next year. When the opera season began, he could only sigh at the remembrance of the music of which he was passionately fond, and hum an old air, at some risk to himself, while he was shaving.

And why was all this? Why could not the child of freedom do what he liked? Why could not the chosen favourite of fortune partake, by a sip now and then, if not by full delicious draughts of the luxurious tide that flowed to his very lips? Why, with health and strength, could he not ride his own hunter and dine jovially? What spell sealed up his eyes and ears to the charms of painting and music? What demon interposed between the innermost promptings and desires of his heart, and their full gratification in the endearments of a delightful home, hallowed by angel affections? With every blessing life can possess, a distinguished name, a lofty position, wealth to confer comfort on others, a kind heart to prompt its right use, a choice of associates, and an abode which might have led to the inference that the garden of Eden had been let on building leases —why were these prizes in effect blanks; the cup of bitterness drained, the wine of life untasted; the desert only sought, the rose-garden avoided?

In the list of cabinet ministers, or of the leaders of opposition, the *why* was discoverable. The records of Party explained all. No course of life seemed destined to run in a fairer and smoother channel than his; but

he voluntarily plunged into politics, and the stream became rough, turbid, and impetuous. He made no attempt to struggle against it; a master-spell was upon him, and he allowed himself to be borne onward far from the alluring paths of learned leisure, the brilliant circles of luxury and refinement, the green resting-places and loopholes of retreat, whence the wheels of the world might be seen at full work. He aimed at directing the mighty machine, and instantly became absorbed in it; he could no more extricate himself, once entangled, than the various portions of the complicated machinery could act independently of each other. From that moment he was doomed

To scorn delights, and live laborious days.

The meanest hind, the veriest drudge on his estate, had a happy, idle life of it in comparison. Not a groom, or clerk, or messenger employed by him that had not a whole year's holiday once a twelvemonth, if the toils and troubles of such a condition were to be estimated by the overflowing measure that fell to his own share. Every hour of the day had some imperative demand upon it; every minute of the evening, of the deep midnight, often until almost dawn, was pre-occupied a fortnight before.

Every morning brought its manifold tasks and duties to the unwearied and excited mind of the great Leader; applications in every conceivable form for favours out of his reach; claims, one hundred strong, upon the solitary favour that happened to be disposable (so that the misery of making "ninety-nine men discontented and one ungrateful" fell to his lot as often as he did a kindness); inquiries the most delicate to answer; information to give guardedly, or to withhold while seeming to convey it; jealousies between colleagues to allay;

discontent and suspicion among supporters to lull, by letter and interview; demands of pressing friends to ward off, without offence; faithful promises to make, and sometimes, when desperately driven, to perform; important interests to conciliate; opinions of public bodies to consult; fears of graziers, sugar-bakers, or money-brokers to appease; deputations to receive, five-and-twenty deep, all speaking at a time; catechism to study first, and replies to explain and defend afterwards in a published correspondence.

Then there would be official blunders to repair; jobs of tricky but influential allies to conceal; subordinates of good family to defend if needful. Public measures to devise, public statements to prepare; to write the play and cast the parts, always having to act the principal; unlooked-for questions, suddenly arising, to adjust, or to decide upon a course of adjustment, perhaps in the dark; fresh regulations applicable to fresh circumstances to make from time to time; correspondence without end from all ends of the earth to read through and remember, so as to answer a question relative to it at the shortest notice; replies to dictate, and agents to instruct according to the tone of them, with ten thousand things beside, included in the *rôle* of official duty, all tending to prove that every great Minister's morning ought to be a month long.

But all these things done and performed, with visits of state and the necessary courtly attendances added to them, the day's work was not yet half got through.

To devise public measures, to discover reasons for introducing them, and arrange the argument in their support, was an essential duty; but there yet remained the necessary and laborious task of exposing, damaging, and defeating the measures of a rival party. To rush to the rescue of a friend, and to promote the fortunes

of an ally, were tasks to be promptly executed; yet it was equally expedient to watch vigilantly for an opportunity of disabling his adversary, and injuring his reputation. There was no end to work, in discharging great guns, and in loading the smaller arms of subordinates; in demonstrating the excellence of measures proposed, and exhibiting the mischievous character of the unknown plans of opposition.

The day thus consumed in writing, arranging and rehearsing, there was the acting of the play at night. The great Leader seldom devoted to public speaking alone—not to planning, not to meditation, but to oratorical delivery only—less than a sixth part of the four-and-twenty hours. Very often a fourth part was devoted to that portion of his duty: and one versed in statistics might have had little difficulty in showing, that of the interval between his twentieth and sixtieth year, not less than a period of ten years had been publicly occupied in making speeches; in actual public exercise of the lungs, quite exclusive of the years consumed in preparing matter for the few brief observations which it was evermore his duty to offer.

But perhaps he had the world's homage as the reward of this heroic devotion? On the contrary, he was assured, night after night, that his plans were foolish, mischievous, borrowed, or abortive; that his motives were corrupt, selfish, and despicable; that his sayings were insidious, and his doings dishonest; he was reviled by his friends when he was conciliatory, and by his enemies when he was firm; he was interrupted in his explanation by fierce, discordant yells, and a black torrent was constantly poured upon him through the pen of the journalist. Cheat, knave, &c., were the kindest epithets bestowed upon him daily. Sometimes he was

voted merely a contemptible tool, at others he rose to the dignity of a consummate tyrant. All who belonged to him were abused, each according to his degree. High-born, he was supposed to grasp power from an aristocratic love of ascendancy; wealthy, he was accused of seeking office from a subserviency to the sordid influences; fond of elegant pleasures, and of the arts which adorn while they delight, he was pronounced hard and ascetic; gentle-natured, he was thought contemptuous and vindictive.

And for this he had gone on sacrificing his happiness, his tranquillity, his family's peace of mind, adding no lustre to his noble name, enjoying nothing that belonged to him, toiling as no slave toiled, undermining his health past repair, and contracting that "perilous stuff," which, weighing upon the heart, defies the physician.

As he still continued within hearing, and still persevered in his harangue, amidst the most discordant clamour, that grew louder as his speech lengthened, the spectacle became humiliating as well as melancholy; and perhaps with a tincture of disdain in the pity that prompted it, the exclamation once more rose to my lips —"Poor devil!"

Half-waking up, I became conscious that in the confusion of my dream Helplessness and Power had become associated, and instead of exciting widely opposite emotions, had created a kindred pity. Extremes had met. But again dozing, a crowd of objects appeared before me, varied as the glowing figures in the fire, whose influence oppressed my senses. Foremost of them, was a starved and ragged urchin, in the act of picking a pocket. In his infancy he had crawled about as he could, until he was of age to mount the steps of a factory. The factory closed in the decay of trade, but the little

schooling he obtained enabled him to write "a piece," and with the pence thus obtained he bought some prints, which he offered for sale to passers by. This was an offence in the eye of the law, and he was committed to prison for fourteen days. Released, he missed even his miserable prison fare, and being just tall enough to reach a pocket, though not to dive into one, he caught with trembling and inexperienced fingers the corner of a dazzling handkerchief protruding from the broadcloth of a millionnaire. As he made his first essay, he was grasped (being hardly more than a handful) by the broad and heavy hand of the law; and "Poor devil!" again escaped my lips.

As he was borne away, crying and struggling impotently, one who should have been his schoolmaster came by. His head was white, his eyes sunken, his cheeks hollow, his body bent. For fifty years he had devoted his little stock of scholarship, and his greater store of morality and conscientiousness, to the tuition of youth, without reputation, without reward. From sunrise until past sunset, he had daily pursued his thankless and miserably-paid calling; sparing no pains to cultivate in a pupil a dawning faculty that promised well, and checking with equal care the growth of evil propensities. Patient, watchful, and discriminating, he had "done his spiriting gently;" sparing the rod, but not spoiling the child.

But the child is not always father to the man. With the sense of awe and of dependance, the sense of respect, even of memory, vanished; of the hundreds he had led into the rising path, not one in riper years continued young enough in heart to recollect the early and invaluable lesson; and it was not until he himself became in turn the taught, discovering how much easier it was to sow than to reap, to communicate knowledge than to

instil gratitude, that the shadow of his destiny fell upon him. With his quarterly bills the debt had been paid in full, while he fancied it was running on at compound interest. He had manufactured scholars, and like Lingo, he looked upon himself as the master of scholars. The delusion in his old age was pitiable; and the exclamation, "Poor devil!" was not misapplied here.

A clerk, armed with a blue bag, thrust this figure aside, and hurried on with the air of one who was little accustomed to take his ease in the world, certainly not "in his inn," for he belonged to Lincoln's. Early and late he toiled and trotted, sighed for freedom and engrossed; abbreviating words to shorten his labour, and yet multiplying epithets to make the brief long. But before an involuntary "poor devil!" had become audible, the barrister himself appeared,—success in the swing of his gown, occupation in his action, prosperity in his unpowdered wig.

Yet "poor devil!" almost escaped me at the first meeting. His large fee checked it for an instant; the audience before which he had to plead, further retarded its utterance; but it was fast breaking out again, as he ran his eye over his brief, and discovered the scarecrow he was to dandify.

The process of manufacturing a silk purse out of the ear of such an animal as his client, was a most difficult and painful one. At one turn of his case he must argue black to be white, and at another, white to be black. He had to prove that the defendant, born in Caledonia, was not a native of Scotland! He had to demonstrate, first, that one and one make less than two, and, next, that two and two make more than four. He had to maintain, not a doubtful case, but a cause that was only doubtful to other people. He had to advocate the claim of so much villany, just so much, as might legally co-

exist with his conscience; feeling a natural desire, as a gentleman, to throw up his brief, and yet entertaining an uncomfortable consciousness that there were professional grounds for retaining it; dreading the degradation of aiding a scoundrel-scheme, and yet equally shrinking from that abandonment of a case intrusted to him, which anticipates a fatal verdict—nay, which almost usurps the functions of a jury.

As he proceeded to argue against his convictions, and, in the teeth of proved facts, to deny what was evident to men's senses; to throw false weights into the scale of justice; to hoodwink the clear-seeing; to interpret the law now by its spirit, and now by its letter, as occasion served; to banter or browbeat the timid, and extort from the inexperienced inadvertent expressions contradictory to their deliberate assertions, and anon to throw suspicion upon a true witness, seeking the escape of the worst of criminals rather than disappoint his audience of a speech, and himself of a display; indignation and disgust had nearly terminated my doze: but when he again appeared, labouring in vain over a bad case, or, destitute of a case, straining his hungry eyes in quest even of the worst, which yet came not throughout the long, long term, the sigh made its way, and pity again spoke in the old key—"Poor devil!"

Another miscellaneous multitude came into view. Gentlemen insolvents, who had spent a cool fifty thousand before they came of age; and middle-aged miserables, who, with ten fifty thousands in hand, never knew how to spend a hundred pounds a-year. The poor devils!

Here was a smart, smirking, self-sufficient elderly youth, industriously bent on smiling himself into the hearts of all the women he met, making offers of his

hand, with a liberality which, had there been the smallest chance of acceptance, would have been rash in a Briareus, and securing nothing anywhere but a chilling rejection, a stare of angry astonishment, or a suggestion relative to the common fate of vanity and presumption from a sensitive brother, touching horseponds, horsewhips, or horse-pistols at the best.

Here was, moreover, a bridegroom in his raptures; in the first bloom of his passionate idolatry; secure in the possession of an angelic creature, and therefore the happiest of the happy for life; but there was at the same time something visible in the corners of the angelic creature's very bright black eyes, that in spite of his present ecstasy and exulting anticipation, forced out, as the smirking confidence of the all-rejected suitor had done before, the piteous ejaculation—"Poor devil!"

Here stood a sturdy grasper of hard cash, very cunning in his way, handing over his bullion in exchange for the note of hand of a "leg," confident that he was thereby making sixty per cent., and doing a devilish good thing for himself. Poor devil! And there was the flashy representative of various enlightened and independent electors, who having just turned his coat, and thus attracted the general attention of the spectators, was congratulating himself on having happily discovered the right side of things, on finding himself famous. Poor devil! who are his constituents?

But amongst a troop of objects, all unlike, except in the circumstance of being equally entitled to a rude sort of commiseration, trampers by the road-side, tillers of the field, delvers far underground, sons of hard toil mingled with the children of idleness, who often in their way toil harder still to drag themselves through life, poor devils! there was one disconsolate, yet willing labourer, who fixed my attention. It was the

curate of the parish to which the other poor devils belonged.

Weddings, churchings, christenings, burials, visitations of the sick, and school examinations; morning and afternoon service, with sermons thrown in as make-weights; his slip of a garden to attend to, his sundry miles to walk daily through miry ways, his six boys to instruct in Latin and morality, his wife to lecture on serenity of temper, his regularly rejected article to write for the magazine, and his suit of black to watch day by day in its rapid declension towards a dun-colour; all this, and infinitely more to do, for sixty pounds a year! What a life he had of it! Poor—no, poor gentleman!

Dodging through the crowd, came a poor devil more familiarly known to me; it was the printer's; the humblest member of the great republic of letters; the last and least of the Romans; the link between the literate and the illiterate.

At the first view, his seemed an enviable, an honoured lot! Who would not feel proud and joyful to be the bearer of that proof of the first sheet of the "Lyrical Ballads," to the great Bard of the Lakes! Where is the reader of romance who would not feel it a labour of love and pleasure, to carry those first printed chapters of "Rienzi," and place them in the hands of the brilliant Novelist! Nay, where is the timid and delicate lady who would hesitate to play printer's devil, if the task were to deliver that proof for correction (if such were possible), to the author of the "Irish Melodies" in person!

But upon a nearer view of matters, the printer's devil did not seem to bear any resemblance to *him* who once got into paradise, a place quite beside the path of our little peripatetic. His thoughts were not fixed on

the immortal to whom he was going, but on the mortal way he had to go; he heeded not, in the proof he bore, the depth of the matter, but in the street before him the depth of the mud. He would as soon carry a proof of the Price Current, as of Congreve's plays, unless in the latter instance the distance should be less. He could sleep during the time he had to wait for it, just as well, whether the house were Adam Smith's, or Horace Smith's, or merely Smith's. Early or late, east or west, hot or cold, wet or dry, he walked away with his proof, always half-asleep, a semi-somnambulist; a glorious torch-bearer, unconscious of the rays which circled him; a cherub bearing melodious tidings in the semblance of a little devil.

But as, conformably with his habit of an afternoon, and at all other seasons, he dozed industriously, I caught a new infection from the poor devil of my dream, and my sleep deepened, so also did my reflections.

"What!" I exclaimed, quietly, so as not to terminate the doze prematurely. "What! are all these conditions of life, each so unlike the other, some so opposite, in reality, much the same? Is the possessor of riches and power, equally the drudge of necessity, an exile from pleasure, with the parish-apprentice? Is the teacher's life, no less than the rapscallion's who was never taught to read, one of trials and privations, and toil, and trouble? Is a change of name, of place, and of dress, all that constitutes the difference between one kind of drudgery and another? However different the drama, low farce or heroic tragedy, do both wear the same look when you go behind the scenes, and survey their qualities, not from the dress-boxes, but from the back of the stage? And are we all, in some costume or other, but Slaves of the Lamp! Poor Devils!"

These, and many other moral reflections which fol-

lowed, must have increased my sleepiness until I was stupified; for a most absurd succession of anomalous figures, of objects the most insanely incongruous, passed before me. The printer's devil seemed to have become prime minister, the curate had acquired an imp-like shape, the schoolmaster was much less than human, and the barrister worse than a brute. In short, as the ground shifted, like a dioramic view, I felt myself sliding into a scene Underground, the country residence of the Personage lately alluded to, as having once paid a temporary visit to paradise.

I had arrived at a most eventful time. The men there had become far too wicked for their ancient master. An insurrection had broken out, and all was in confusion. They were putting out all the fires, introducing what they called a cold-water cure. But worse; they were hunting the Illustrious Personage up and down, who vainly sought to pacify his pupils, vainly implored mercy. Not only was he deposed by proclamation, but the mob, that many-tailed monster, was threatening to take summary vengeance upon him, and lynch-law was legally established.

"Alas!" cried he, in the bitterness of his chilling reverse, and there was something in the moral that forcibly struck me, emanating, as the phrase is, from such a source. "Alas! wickedness is hard work, and devilishly unprofitable!"

I could not even here, as in other instances, influenced doubtless by the force of habit, repress the exclamation —"Poor devil!"

Before my doze ended, I distinctly saw two or three of my own ancestors, with many who are ostentatiously claimed by several pious friends of mine, giving the deposed proprietor hard chase, and diminishing as often as they caught him, some one of his legitimate and

constitutional appendages. His horns had fallen a sacrifice at the first rush of the insurrection; his persecutors next proceeded to pare his hoofs to the quick; and when I started up from my doze, falling at the same time into the fire, they were deliberately chopping off his tail!

Poor dev—— But one need not pity him when wide awake.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LATE MR. DODGE.

THERE are hosts of Dodges at this day about town. Every city in the kingdom, perhaps, may boast its specimen; but London is their "assigned and native dwelling-place," if dwelling-place they can ever be said to have. The reader must have known at least one of them in his life; and even the scanty account that memory enables us to supply of the character and movements of Jem Dodge, deceased, may serve to bring an old acquaintance to his recollection. A single portrait will suffice for the whole race of Dodges. They are as like as peas, or prize poems.

Jem established the legitimacy of his claim to the name of Dodge in his early schooldays, at which period our knowledge of him began. He was famous for being the greatest dunce in the school one day, and the cleverest lad in it the next, to the wonderment of all his class-fellows, who never could account for his sudden starts in parsing, although half of them had most mysteriously lost the very "exercises" in which he happened to excel; exercises which they had diligently completed, and carefully copied out. He had the happiest knack at coming into school half an hour after time, stealing across the wide room unobserved, while his own class

was ranged at the table before the awful examiner, extricating the needful book from the box under his seat, letting down the lid noiselessly, though it would have creaked in any other hand, descending thence under three lines of desk to the table, and slipping into his place just in time, as if he had been invisible as well as inaudible. This would happen once, sometimes twice a day; and he was never discovered, except when the attention of the master was roused by the gradual hush, the breathless silence throughout the school, with which those movements of a creeping genius were flatteringly regarded. Then out burst the master's fatal and exulting "Oh-ho! sir."

Young Dodge was wonderfully expert at tumbling out of trees without breaking his neck. He was never long out of a scrape, but then he was never long in one. His courage and presence of mind never failed him. He was the only boy amongst us who could grapple with a huge cur, which a butcher in that neighbourhood used to oblige his customers by setting at us every now and then. It generally fell to Dodge's lot to be first seized by the hard-mouthed animal, but as often as that happened, he contrived to drop suddenly down, and roll upon the ground with the dog tumbling over him, turning it all to sport, and so disarming his rampant assaulter. He made friends with the butcher himself afterwards, for the sake of gratifying a peculiarly refined and delicate taste of his; one that, as he grew up to be a stout iron-armed lad, became a passion; that of "assisting" at the knocking-down of bullocks. His last exploit in that way was just before he left school, when, being big enough to flog any schoolmaster in Christendom, he was under sentence of punishment, that for him had no terrors, so long as he could indulge his favourite propensity for patting the

head of an ox with a pole-axe. "Now then," we recollect his crying out, the pole-axe aforesaid raised, and the beast drawn up for sacrifice, "make haste with that rope; never mind stopping to tie his head down close; for I 've got to be back at two o'clock *to be flogged!*" There seemed to be a fine touch of poetical justice in it. He was not flogged after all; how he evaded it we don't remember; but he always escaped. He "dodged."

It did not appear that he ever had a father or mother, or any but a very distant relation by whom he had been sent to school. When this patron died, Dodge was withdrawn, and disappeared for a year or two; he then returned to school, having found another distant relation to supply the place of the first. This probably was his fortune all through life; relation after relation, each more distant than the last, continually turning up, and as regularly vanishing; in which way alone is it easy to account for the ups and downs of his career.

It was long after these days that Dodge was encountered on the high-road of the world. This was at Newmarket, where he was riding the high horse at a smart pace, or rather making a crow's flight of it straight on to fortune and renown. He had a good betting-book, spirits to match, and funds to bear him up in any reasonable venture. It turned out that he had also half-a-dozen of the best horses that ever—lost; and some foxhounds, curious for leading their owner a wild-goose chase. The dogs he continued to follow, until in due course he went to them; and was soon as much lost sight of as if he had been "under the turf instead of on it."

His labouring bark having thus climbed hills of sea Olympus high, now ducked again to a proportionable pitch of lowness: wherein if he had remained a whole twelvemonth instructing mermen in the art of seahorse-

racing, he could not have been more hidden from mortal research. But after a time he came up to the surface again; so changed, that we hardly recognised in the grave, quiet, black-gaitered, and apparently middle-aged gentleman whom we encountered in Lincoln's-inn-fields, the youthful, high-blooded "heavy swell," whom we had not long before seen flashing in the sunshine of sport and frolic at Newmarket! For the first time, since the hour when we entered school, and shot peas by the hundred all over the floor from a small silently-shooting tube of his own invention, we accosted him, not as "Jem," but as "Mr." Dodge!

He was then, as he most soberly informed us, the managing director, being also the founder, of what he called a New Patent Missionary Association; the object of which was, not to send out patent missionaries into savage lands, as might naturally be inferred; but to send out to the South-Sea Islands, and such like necessitous countries, for the free use of the inhabitants, all such new and acknowledged improvements in the arts and sciences, as could not become instantly or universally available in this country, by reason of the patents that had been taken out by the inventors for their own protection.

The advantages of his plan he expatiated on, in a speech which, for length and depth, might have been delivered at the Freemasons' Tavern close by; and he urged that while no possible injury could be done to the patentees, by extending the uses of their discoveries and improvements beyond the limits to which they were here restricted by law, the utmost imaginable benefits might be derived by our unfortunate savage brethren in far-off islands, from the latest achievements of science in this country, where private rights rendered them for

a season less profitable to the public than they ought to be. "Look," he argued, "at the last improvements in the paddle-wheel; see how the spinning-jenny has at length been perfected; think of the recent ingenuities brought to bear in the printing of silks and cottons. How many of our most important improvements and additions in these and other matters are tied up by the law of patents! Look, too, at the operation of the copyright law. There is surely no reason why the Ashantees or the New Zealanders should be kept in darkness by *that*: why they should not have the full and free benefit of the last editions of our modern poets and novelists!"

We ventured, as may be supposed, to urge in reply, the slight but obvious objection, that the latest improvements in science might be less useful, though freely thrown open for general adoption, to the natives of a country where the machinery and implements so improved, had never once been seen or heard of since the birthday of the first schoolmaster; that patent candlesticks might be of no essential value to a people on whose genius the faintest glimmer of a rushlight had never dawned; that improved watch-keys might add little to the convenience of men who tell the time of day by the sun; and in short, that the first edition of Wordsworth would be just as popular in Owhyhee as the last. But when Mr. Dodge answered with a serious air and in a tone of pique, that there never yet was a plan devised by human wisdom quite perfect, and that nothing was so easy as to discover some objection to the best-laid and most practicable scheme, we had not another word to say. When he left us, he was going to inspect the progress of a complete model of the *Times* establishment in all its ramifications, which, when

completed, was destined to be sent out to Terra del Fuego, to facilitate the successful publication and management of the first Fuegian newspaper.

Our next meeting with Jem Dodge was at Leicester, where we most unexpectedly discovered him in an attire opposed to all his former styles of costume, but not less appropriate to the character he had now assumed. Dull and weary to a degree which no theatrical barbarity could either deepen or alleviate—not even Cibber's "Richard the Third," the part of *Gloucester* by a gentleman, his first appearance on any stage—we entered the theatre; and in the representative of that brilliant character, which the modern stage-version so infamously distorts and obscures, discovered the triumphant owner of losing horses, and the grand manager of patent missionaries. Jem Dodge was the *Duke of Gloucester*; or more correctly speaking, he was not. The joke was too good to be missed, and we could not forbear laying claim to our acquaintance with the versatile but nameless gentleman behind the scenes.

An apology, on the score of extreme hoarseness, for the comic song which he was to have sung after the tragedy, was the consequence of our meeting and the pleasant supper that ensued; but in the height of our hilarity over this, not a word could be extracted from him in explanation of the change that had come over the spirit of that dislocated dream, his life; it seemed as natural to him as the casting off his spangled robe for his plain coat; a hat with feathers for a hat without. This is a characteristic of the Dodges; they regard every transformation as a thing of course, and incapable of exciting curiosity or surprise. They never allude to the past or to the future. The present absorbs every thought, every feeling. It is to them their life. They see nothing but what is. The enterprise in which they

are engaged is the purpose of their being, the one thing which they came into the world to do. They pursue it with all the passion and energy of a first love while it lasts; and when the vision breaks and fades into the light of common day, they lose themselves as readily in the fascinations of another dream, wild as the wildest of all former delusions, and devote themselves to the unfolding of its mysteries, with the same intensity of application; the same credulity in its promises, and superiority to the evils of disappointment.

Before we parted, an arrangement was formed and fixed on Mede and Persian principles, for another meeting in London, where Dodge was to visit us, previous to his finally settling the terms of that engagement, as first tragedian, at Drury-lane (the patent *was* then employed sometimes for legitimate purposes), which was already "all but" concluded.

On our arrival in town, however, we learned quite accidentally that Jem had attained a different kind of distinction. "Tragedy is my forte, nothing but tragedy can ever have the least charm for *me*," were his last words; but now we found that he had been promptly, and at his own solicitation, appointed to a magistracy in Australia; whither in due course he voyaged. There after a season he became famous for exploring the interior, leaving mere convict-questions to settle themselves; and also for most obligingly and philosophically marrying a wild lady, much more darkly complexioned than himself, and singularly unprovided with bridal habiliments.

After some time, when, if a thought of Dodge glanced across the mind, it pictured him as a settler in the bush, five hundred miles away from the semblance of civilisation, or perhaps as the elected King of all the kangaroos, up he started one day like Jack-in-the-box, at a Pancras

vestry meeting, making a speech that literally convulsed the whole parish, and rendered Pancras for a time the envy of surrounding districts, and the admiration of the world. The oration, or to say the least, the heads of it, would undoubtedly have stood a fairer chance of being preserved as a model for future *aspirants* to Demosthenic renown, if any ingenious person could have discovered what it was about; but it acquired for him astonishing and immediate repute; enough, according to the doctrine of that modest admirer of genius, whose gifts have since obtained for him the admiration he lavished upon others; enough to "fill the ambition of a private man," by showing, clear as moonshine,

"That Chatham's language was his mother-tongue."

Before we could succeed in identifying this Dodge as our own; before we could suppose anything so preposterous as that our meteoric wanderer in the woods had become a fixed star in the great metropolis, he was flaming in the forehead of the morning sky, a light to lighten all Londoners; and before we could recover from our surprise so far as to accept his invitation to dinner at his pleasant abode on one of the terraces in Regent's-park; lo! he had ceased to occupy it! ceased to shake the vestry-room to its foundations, ceased to convulse Pancras, ceased to agitate Europe with the thunder of his invective! His pair of horses, and his phaeton, all his "pride, pomp, and circumstance" as a flourishing parishioner, had departed with him; his very fame disappeared too, fleeing at his side like his shadow.

When he was next heard of, a long time afterwards, he was at Bristol, buried up to the ears in religious controversy, and composing tract upon tract, every one of them conclusive, unanswerable, and the best thing

he ever wrote. These he published at the lowest possible price, which lowest possible price grew less and less at each successive publication, in order, as he said, to make quite sure of a very extensive circulation; and, perhaps, among all the controversial points which it was his business to settle and make clear, not one perplexed him like the fact, that the more he reduced his price below the lowest possible level, to make sure of an enormous sale, the more insignificant the sale was certain to be. There, nevertheless, in a peculiarly dark little coal-hole, which he called a chapel, was he regularly to be espied, like Diogenes in his tub, or Shenstone's charming schoolmistress,

——"disguised in looks profound,;"

resolutely bent on reconciling certain theological differences, by which the truly enlightened, but somewhat unpolished classes in and around that city, were learnedly divided.

It was on his return from this exemplary experiment of gilding the refined gold of Bristol, that we encountered him in, or on, a stage-coach. His costume on this occasion, denoted how ardently his enthusiastic mind had been devoted to high objects only, and how indifferent it had become to the minor pursuits and frivolous tastes of life. The rim of his brown beaver hat was flat at the sides, but slightly turned up before, and considerably behind; from beneath it, his hair fell in straight patches, of very unequal length. A high, stiff, shirt-collar, hollowed out behind, obtruded against that part where the ear joins the head, two particularly sharp points, that seemed to fix him as on the horns of a dilemma, and, had the pillory been furnished with a frill of spikes, might have suggested some idea of the pleasantness of that machine. His body was wrapped

in a gray garment, that, as it bore no resemblance to a cloak, and was much too large for a mere great-coat, is quite as unmentionable as those *et-cæteras*, which, exhibiting below them a pair of speckled worsted hose, fell far short of the tops of his ankle-boots, the soles whereof added scarcely less than two inches to his height. A huge stick was under one arm, and a huger umbrella under the other.

Now, how is it possible to trace in this whimsical and eccentric figure, with language, manners, and tastes to correspond, one solitary atom of resemblance to the splendidly-coloured full-length portrait which flashed, in the following spring, from the walls of the Royal Academy's exhibition; an undoubted likeness of the elegant and popular author of "Profusion: a Tale of St. James's, in 3 vols., by James Dodge, Esq., of Rixton Hall, Wilts." There was not a feature, not a line, not a tint, in common. Apollo bore more resemblance to Hercules; Hyperion bore as much to a satyr.

Mr. Dodge was the dandy of the season. A Dodge cab was started and Dodge cravats were displayed in the shop-windows. He was universally voted to be young, handsome, rich, and a decided genius. He sat half the day with sparkling rings drawn over his faultlessly-fitting gloves, inditing the loveliest of answers to the most exquisite of notes, intimating in the most graceful handwriting that he felt too delighted by the too charming proposal, that it was only too kind, and he was only too happy in the idea, &c. The novel had its day, and Dodge had no more; the book went out, and the author with it. Perhaps his invention exhausted itself in a single effort; perhaps the distant relation whose estate had fallen into his possession came to life again and reclaimed it. It is only too certain, as he would have said, that he rose one morning with neither

land nor genius, neither money nor fashion. Of his numberless admirers, few could remember having heard of his name; and as for the fashionable publishers that besieged his doors,

> "He counted them at break of day;
> And when the sun set, where were they?"

It could not be much more than a twelvemonth or so from the day on which we met him cantering, in the full pride of fortune and success, down Regent-street, attracting to his horse the admiration of half the throng of pedestrians, and to himself the curiosity of the other half, that we had nearly driven over him in Houndsditch, as he tottered with a very elderly look indeed, at the head of a ragged regiment, whose cause he had benevolently espoused, and with whom his appearance denoted that he might be sympathising from experience. These were a class of persons, of both sexes, and of every age from seven to seventy, whose vested rights, he considered, had been too little cared for, and whose worldly interests, nay, whose very means of subsistence, had been sacrificed to a sweeping and remorseless spirit of improvement and economy. They were the old, tradeless, bankrupt, undone match-venders of the metropolis and the suburbs; victims, every one of them, to the invention of Lucifer-lights and Congreve-matches; burnt-offerings, all, on the altar of modern science.

Dodge devoted himself night and day to their cause; offering to prove, on sundry occasions, to the Lord Mayor, whom he waited upon in company with a deputation from the defunct trade, that a deep stain would be left on the national character, and a page of the History of England be blotted all over, and for ever, unless the claims to compensation which the injured

society of match-venders had established, were recognised by the legislature, or the further "spread" of instantaneous ignition were prohibited by act of parliament. After vainly attempting to interest the timber-trade in his endeavours, showing to various great houses that not only the constitution of the country, but their own welfare as merchants was at stake, he retired from the contest, and—set up a large lucifer manufactory himself; but as his machinery was constructed on a new and improved principle, and in a fire-proof building, the premises were shortly afterwards blown up, they, and everything they contained, being totally consumed. The unfortunate manufacturer, uninsured, not having an article of wearing-apparel left, or a sixpence on earth to live upon for a single day, immediately made an excursion to Boulogne, with the prudent resolution of residing there for a few months, until some kind of subsistence should happen to present itself to his view.

On the Continent a field of infinite variety was opened to his enterprizes; and in a half-dozen places he was heard of in less than that number of years, as having just made, or just lost, or being about to make, or on the verge of losing, a splendid fortune. He was always just going to move the world, and always failed exactly one moment before he discovered a secure and convenient spot for fixing his lever. At every change of scene, a personal, and indeed a moral transformation took place. At Boulogne, it is probable, he only did that which other people do at Boulogne; that is, he resided there for a time because he was destitute of the means of subsistence; but at Paris, the prospect cleared, and he came forth "a giant refreshed," though he did seem at the beginning somewhat stunted in his growth.

This arose from the grand mistake which he com-

mitted in attempting to cultivate French patronage by piquing French vanity. He must, forsooth, begin with a resolution, quite French, it is true, but not therefore quite flattering, to startle, to astonish, to overwhelm; and to accomplish this purpose, by the readiest means, he judged it necessary to improve perfection, to throw a perfume on the violet, and add another hue unto the rainbow. To say exactly the same thing in other words, he essayed to refine upon French cookery, and to perfect French dancing. He dared to tamper with their dinners and ballets. He aspired to the immortality of one faultless, final, revolution-defying dish; one additional, superfluous prodigy of a piroutte, at which sylphs should expire in envy and sinners in rhapsody. Dodge certainly did devise a dish or two, insinuating in name and mysterious enough in flavour, which might have been very popular from their merit if they had not been utterly discountenanced for their origin; and he assuredly did contrive, emulating the exquisite effect of pauses in music, to introduce what he designated the poetry of still-life, of *statue-ism*, to set off the poetry of motion in the ballet; and admirable would that effect have been considered, had the novelty been as much applauded as it was hissed.

But his natural failure as a true-born Englishman, in matters of taste, only paved the way for his enthusiastic reception as a profound philosopher. He threw his hook into the current of national vanity and prejudice, and all Paris came to nibble. He set up an academy for teaching the art and mystery of crime in all its branches; undertaking to show the comparative excellence and progress of modern nations in the perpetration of atrocious deeds, and the means by which these may be simplified and rendered perfectly easy to the meanest capacity. There was no lack of listeners, nor of effective

logic. The lecturer reviewed the pretensions of various rival nations to superiority in crime; showing where the natural capacity of a people had been checked, and where genius had burst through every disadvantage of good government and education; where the uncramped spirit had attained a mastery in the higher order of offences, and where it had been so repressed by artificial institutions as to be capable merely of low depredations and skulking knavery.

In every instance he handsomely assigned a decided superiority to the criminals of the country to which his audience belonged (most unjustly, it is true; but the flattery was neither the less delicate nor the less successful). He then demonstrated, from facts collected personally during his residence among the convict population in our own colony, the palpable inferiority of this country, not only in the higher but the lower branches of crime (again the lecturer was unjust, we fear, but England had not used him very well, and he spoke from prejudice). He attempted to prove, that in Great Britain, where freedom is so much talked of, many innocent indulgences enjoyed by other nations are disallowed by law; he showed, from his own observation, that in this self-lauded land the arts of assassination are scarcely understood, and rarely practised with success; and he inferred, from his intercourse with our own convicts and the citizens of Paris, that one Frenchman would cheat better than ten Englishmen.

He next touched upon the mysteries of suicide, from its most refined and ingenious to its more simple and vulgar forms; and complimented the genius of his auditory by asserting that no man on earth, to whatsoever nation he may belong, could destroy himself with the dexterity of a Parisian, or render by the act so valuable a service to mankind. The cheers that fol-

lowed this declaration burst forth again upon the intimation that any Frenchman might make the fortune of his family, by simply coming to this country and giving Englishmen a lecture upon suicide, ending with a practical example of the perfection to which the science has been brought. The philosopher concluded by offering to illustrate his own ideas of accomplished and consummate villany by an example, either of murder, or robbery, as it might be called for, on the person of any one of his own countrymen who might have honoured him with his presence.

The guillotine and hair-triggers, the Seine and charcoal, the dice-box and knavery in general, were subjects not soon exhausted; but the fortune acquired by them easily was; for Dodge was discovered no great while afterwards scheming for a living from the results of a novel experiment set on foot in Brussels. He was there recognised as the sole proprietor of the new Hôtel Homœopathique, established apparently on a highly profitable principle. Fielding has said that borrowing is as good a mode of cheating as any other; and dinner-giving is perhaps no less effective as a means of homicide. So our philosopher felt, and he took advantage of the homœopathic doctrine, the instant it was explained to him, to apply it to the human appetite, as well as the other ills that flesh is heir to, and to set up an hotel for providing entertainment exclusively upon the principles of homœopathy. The *table-d'hôte* was appointed to yield per head exactly half a spoonful of unexceptionable soup, a boiled shrimp, and the tenth of an ounce of chicken, avoirdupois. Crowds flocked to secure the life-preserving advantages of the homœopathic dinner; and the enjoyment of dining without the smallest injury to an invaluable appetite, or the smallest risk of apoplectic visitations, instantly became quite the rage.

Had it but lasted, Dodge, who contrived to feast a whole family on the wing of a snipe (wine in proportion) could only have got rid of his profits by erecting a temple to Apicius; but unfortunately those who enjoyed his dinners so much that they could not forbear dining over again at a neighbouring hotel, began to intimate, after a time, their prejudices in favour of the homœopathic principle of paying, and hinted that the charge should be also infinitesimal. This literal spirit on the part of the public, this never knowing when there is enough of a good thing, ruined Dodge upon the spot; and after a few more experiments, upon equally original plans, all of which were entirely successful until they failed, he went to settle at Florence, for the purpose of bringing out a Dutch journal of fashion, politics, and commerce, which his acuteness perceived to be a desideratum in that city.

But "England, with all thy faults," Dodge loved thee still; for hither the adventurer in due course returned, as we ascertained, to our no little amusement. The peculiarly dim and disgustingly oily aspect which that important part of mortal costume, the boots, one morning presented, led to the most vehement inquiries into the cause of this lack-lustre effect, which were met by that announcement that a new and miraculous preparation had been employed to produce the result; a grand discovery in science, "Dodge's patent self-polishing boot-preserver," warranted, like Dian herself, to retain its virtue in any climate! Dodge! Here then was old *Hic et Ubique* come again; popping up his head after a long dive, as a blacking-maker of renown, a manufacturer on a grand scale, the friend of the shining and the patron of poets. Magnificent beyond parallel were his two establishments at Bishopsgate and in Marylebone, and for a time it appeared doubtful which

of the two districts, the east or the west, would be successful in prevailing upon him to sit in parliament as its representative. But it unluckily happened that two objections to his invaluable preparation were spitefully raised; it presented no polish, and it destroyed the leather with remarkable rapidity. This discovery, however, was not the cause of the failure that ensued; Dodge was not thoroughly ruined until he had triumphantly succeeded in establishing a newspaper, for the purpose of advocating the unequalled merits of his production.

Having brought our rambling and runaway schoolfellow back to London, we shall not pretend to trace him again through its mazes, or to report his supplementary adventures. Twice only did we personally encounter him after this period: once in the character of a wine agent, wherein his deportment was that of a most careful, well-informed, and thoroughly respectable man of business; and once, when he answered an advertisement for a music-master, whose morals would bear the strictest investigation: but he was heard of, as figuring unquestionably in two other distinct capacities; in the one he was captain of a trading vessel, running between Leith and London; and in the other, he acted as parish-clerk, assisting at the various marriages, christenings, and burials, in an extensive district beyond Dockhead.

What reader has not a Dodge of his own; a Dodge of high or of low degree rising upon his recollection? Who but recognises one among his various schoolfellows or acquaintances? These birds of passage build for a brief season under every man's eaves, and are off the instant their nest is finished. Like happiness they are

"Nowhere to be found, or everywhere."

They scarcely preserve till summer the character they assume in spring—

> "But in the course of one revolving moon,
> Are chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon."

The characteristics of erratic Jem are the characteristics of the tribe, only often more variously exhibited. They have all the same sanguine, shifting, versatile disposition; the same elasticity to rise, the same proneness to fall. If they were to go up in a balloon, they would insist upon getting out of the car, a mile from the earth, to inquire after the next door neighbour, or to see "how the land lies." They climb the hill, only to precipitate themselves down the steep side of it. No comic pantomime ever rivalled, in the number, the oddity, or the suddenness of its transformations, the changes of that comic pantomime, their life. They leave their card at your house, as a certificate that they, too, possess a local habitation to-day, and the letter which you direct to their fixed address on the morrow, is returned to you with "gone away," or, "not known in Bolt-court, try Mizzle-terrace," scrawled all over the forlorn and hopeless epistle. This season, you see them, shunning no man's envious or inquiring eye, in a crack box at the opera; and next year they are most inelegantly jammed in a mob waiting for the half-price at the gallery of the Adelphi, having found sixpence on the counter of an oyster-shop. They get out of the Bench with the same facility that they experience in getting into it; and if ever they are transported they are sure to return before their time. They appear to have no more difficulty in furnishing a fine house, and filling its spacious cellars, than they have in finding guests for their table, or a remedy for the ruin that ensues. The sending out cargoes of skates and blankets to Calcutta, is but a

moderate type of their commercial speculations, and their choice of Deadly Smooths to play at whist with is proverbial. Do they not, when all is spent, when no occupation, no income, no prospect here remains for them to cling to; when they have not the hundredth part of one penny-piece, and a still smaller share of present credit; do they not, like Mr. Dodge, repair immediately to Boulogne (how they pay for their passage to that semi-English locality is a profound secret!) and live there for a whole twelvemonth, gay as the lank jaws of chameleons, when they have plenty of cockroaches to line them with.

It was casually mentioned in our hearing the other day, by a venerable acquaintance, that Jem Dodge was dead! "Dead! See, see! he shot a good shoot, and dead!" We felt for Dodge! Dodge, junior, we must style him; for his life could not have run to more than two-thirds of its natural span. The many metamorphoses we have mentioned, and the many more that we have not, all took place before he was forty. We heard the news of his premature departure with a sort of dry tear starting to the eye. Yet a departure in his case could hardly be called death; it was but another and bolder move in the game, the master-trick in the great art of conjuring, the crowning disguise, the last shuffle. One cannot help fancying, moreover, that he would have found the means of cheating the doctor, perhaps by turning doctor himself. He must have escaped the clutches of the grim tyrant, by making a sudden dart under the hearse that had been drawn up for him, as Filch escaped the long arm of the law by diving under the coaches. A funeral he may have had, a regular, solemn, sham funeral. Milton, it will be remembered, had a mock interment during *his* life; coffin, mourners, and all; and Dodge, like the immortal republican, may

have been buried by proxy. We cannot think of him as one seriously defunct. Assuredly he would never remain for twenty years unchanged, like Napoleon; nor could he ever be as one of those skeletons that sleep quietly in their tombs. He would be found, possibly, by the lone and startled churchyard wanderer, at dark midnight, not in the peaceful occupancy of his own hooped and grassy tenement, but thrusting his head out of another gentleman's grave, in a distant corner of the ground.

"You look," said a German-minded, and imaginative friend to a pale, haggard smoker, "you look as if you had got out of your grave to light your cigar, and couldn't find your way back again!"

Dodge would vacate his, not to stroll back again, but simply to change his quarters; to shun what he had shunned invariably all through life, REST! to avoid what all men else most seek, A HOME!

THE GUEST THAT WON'T GO.

THERE are evils that are purely imaginary, experienced but in dreams; and there are real nuisances, endured by some of us, that are only matters of philosophical speculation, or Christian-like merriment, to others. But the misery which is the subject of this revelation is common to all men, to all within the confines of civilisation, for savage life, perchance, knoweth not of the refined barbarity. Before we begin, we feel the torture we are about to inflict. We look first for the sympathy of each particular reader; and having secured that, be it our grateful and humane task to put his generous bosom to the rack. The promises of your

wits, when they engage to tell a story that will make you die of laughter, are so rarely kept, that no coroner was ever heard to complain of the practice; but we shall be more faithful in the redemption of our pledge to fill the reader's mind with agonising recollections, and render him, for one hour at least, unspeakably wretched. No attraction that intense suffering can supply will be wanting to the horrid sketch which is to be drawn. It must move, as we have said, all men alike; every householder above or below the ten-pound limit; nor may any other inhabitant of any tenement soever defy the calamity to be described, as he defies the ravages of a fire, by virtue of being only a lodger.

To make this assertion good, we have but to ask favour for the assumption that every Zimmermanian has his solitude broken in upon sometimes, say, just as he is sitting down to dinner. Grant, then, that every man, however restricted his means of hospitality, has his visiter upon particular occasions; and now grant but one thing more, that he has also his visiter when there is no occasion at all. He has, then, his unbidden guest, he has his DROPPER-IN! Having the Dropper-in, he has, is it anything short of a matter of course, a thing of certainty, an inevitable consequence? we do *not* pause for a reply; he has the After-dinner visiter; the Evening-killer; the Long-stopper; the Sitter-up; the late, lingering, stationary Guest; the Immovable; the Man that never goes! It is of him, with many a mortal shudder, that we would speak. *He* is our hero.

How often, reader, have you encountered him! "The very doorsill is worn with his footstep." The bell-wire trembles at his touch; your knocker knows him, and its griffin-face seems to grin horribly a ghastly smile at his approach. But the smile that awaits him within is genial and not ghastly. He generally assumes the

shape of a very old acquaintance; he pays you the compliment of a call unasked; he has chosen you of all housekeepers at home, as the friend by whose help he is to fill up his vacant evening; he has preferred your simple supper-tray to any delicacy to be had, at his own cost, at his club; he has done you the honour to relish the familiarity of your unattractive fireside, to a game at billiards which he might lose, or going to the opera, where he has no free admission. It is true, the compliment is excessively inconvenient and ill-timed. You might have enjoyed his friendship better had it been less flattering. Your feelings would not have been hurt, had he been more distant. You could well have dispensed with the preference he has shown; and could have soothed yourself during the long evening with the consciousness of having friends *absent*, who were so sincerely attached to you. His tried fidelity did not need the certificate of a call just before supper. Nevertheless the distinction has been awarded you, the homage rendered, the call made; and although you had something rather particular to do, something you cannot without much difficulty postpone; you were interrupted the night before, and the night before that; besides, that book is not half read yet, nor is your long-announced, and anxiously-expected treatise on "Spinal Contortions" so much as commenced; in short, for some reason or other, the knock of the Dropper-in suddenly and unceremoniously knocks some pretty domestic arrangement on the head; yet to be denied to your old acquaintance is impossible; besides, he would walk in, ensconce himself in his particular arm-chair, and stay his time out, whether you were at home or not; and therefore, as you catch his voice inquiring, long after he has passed the street-door, and when he is halfway up stairs, whether he shall find you above, you

prepare to meet his outstretched arm, and hand open as day, with an honest grip and a frank welcome.

That host lacks the genuine spirit of hospitality, or is a very early goer to bed, in whom the glow of this hearty feeling of welcome accorded to an old familiar, could become extinct before one in the morning. Granted, that when the supper is before us, we could wish to be spared the necessity of keeping the excellent appetite of our guest in countenance, and to be excused from participating in a repast, which is superfluous to us who dined late, and have not since felt the influence of the keen air; granted, too, that the expediency of being up soon in the morning, so as to keep an early engagement of some importance, occurs vividly to recollection, and gives a serious shock to our sense of comfort, as we wheel chairs round after supper and settle ourselves in the most social and satisfactory position; nay, it is possible, just possible, that a feeling of weariness occasioned by recent revels too freely enjoyed, renders us for once capable of dispensing with thy weed of glorious feature, oh, Havannah! and of thirsting but for six drops of thy punch without parallel, oh, whiskey of Ireland! But to be drowsy before one o'clock is an offence which the best-natured Dropper-in could not be expected to forgive; to sigh, before one or half-past, for the going-out of Smoke, and the coming-in of Sleep, is to deserve to have your home a Yarrow unvisited for ever; to have none but solitary suppers, cigars that might be warranted town-made, and slumbers mosquito-broken. No, though unprepared for a visiter, and predisposed for bed, give your guest till half-past one. Allow him full latitude for at least his second tumbler; oblige him not, we should have said wish him not, to light his fourth cigar until he has smoked his way leisurely up to it; accord him full scope to indulge his

regular number of cachinnatory tributes to the last new Jonathan, which he challenges you to join him in laughing at, as you are bound to do, although it was from you that he had the joke first, when you were conundrumizing for want of thought three months before. But when you have advanced thus far on your road to morning, you may, under the circumstances, be pardoned for doubting whether it is quite practicable to lengthen your days by continually stealing largely from the night. A jury of Arabs would acquit you of all offence against hospitality, if you were to wish, yea, heartily, that your visiter were anywhere but in your arm-chair, and just in the act of seizing the poker (having known you seven years) with malice aforethought towards every coal that does not emit its flame; producing a blaze that promises to be brilliant an hour hence and longer, one that you would have justly deemed glorious, on the moderate side of midnight.

"Hospitality," said Charles Lamb, "should run fine to the last." We are sure to remember the beautiful maxim; and reading in our friend's contented face, and also in his comfortable position, which he hast just changed to accommodate himself to the blaze he has created, an intention to stop, we shift our attitude too, and commit ourselves with all the resignation we can to the cheering influences of the fire. Add to these, the charm of our companion's conversation; for we are far from having yet had the last of his jokes; there are anecdotes still untold which he has probably not related to us on any similar occasion since last year; besides, he has not yet touched upon the question of education; he has the doctrine of Mesmerism still in reserve; thus, there is no reason whatever to apprehend a dearth of amusing topics. So on we go; time travelling not so slowly after all, till the conscientious clock boldly strikes

two. It is our lot to rejoice in the possession of a particularly loud-ticking eight-day clock—a private-life prodigy after the pattern of the Horse-guards, a domestic edition of St. Paul's. No dropper-in, whether born deaf or not, can help hearing it strike. Well, it now, as we have said, strikes *two*. Alas! it strikes but one of us notwithstanding. Our sitter is stirred from his chair by no such warning. The two clear, sharp strokes move him no more when in a friend's house, than would a postman's knock at the door under similar circumstances: he knows that it does not concern him. What is it to him how time goes, he doesn't. The intimation only suggests to him the expediency of inquiry as to the provision of hot water for his next tumbler of punch; for he knows that servants have such a horrid habit of stealing off to bed if they can, and letting fires below go out before the guest upstairs. He expresses therefore the friendliest anxiety respecting the kettle, and at the same time repeats his experiment with the poker upon the black head of the solitary coal that happens not to be blushing bright red at his prodigious want of conscience and marvellous effrontery. Having arranged the fire, he glances round at the coal-scuttle as a thing that will be wanted presently, and then, with a declaration to the effect that "now come in the sweets of the night," lights his seventh cigar.

No host, so situated, should go so far as to wish his uninvited visiter dead, but how should one help wishing him departed. It requires all one's experience of his many excellent qualities to sustain us at this trying moment. Had he a few merits less; were he less hospitable himself; had one known him for any period under a dozen years; he would infallibly receive notice to quit, in the shape of some broad hint, that should tell its tale more strikingly than the disregarded clock.

But we force ourselves back into complacency by dint of counting up the many feathers in his cap, as numerous as the puffs of smoke he sends forth. We assign to him a virtue, real or fictitious, for every whiff, and thus balance matters and become reconciled; comforting ourselves moreover with the consciousness that *we* have one excellence, that outweighs in its perfection and boundlessness, all that he can boast; we have PATIENCE! We keep thinking what a capital fellow he is, in his way; and also how much he is in *ours*. We acknowledge that he has several of the essentials of a boon companion; much that should render him an ever-welcome visiter; but we feel, too, that he lacks one quality that should belong even to the most delightful guest; as the poet says, or might have said,

"He wants that greatest art, the art *to go*."

Meantime there he sits, with as little capacity to stir (for it does not at this advanced hour appear to be a case of volition) as the lady in "Comus." There he sits—

"Sits like your grandsire carved in alabaster,"

and crowned with smoke-wreaths. We gaze at him, through the mist, with a serious feeling that deepens presently into awe. There still he sits, visibly and breathingly, embodying the spirit of the relentless threat, "I'll never leave you." Beside our hearth, in the old chair wherein we have a thousand times nestled and dozed after dinner, he sits still, like one who had there taken up his everlasting rest. A heaviness creeps over us, too subtle, close and clinging to be struggled with; and in another minute we are dreaming; dreaming, perhaps, that we see King George III. in Cockspur-street, put on the cocked hat he has hitherto held in his hand, and trot up Pall-mall, at a pace which implied

that he had staid too long on his pedestal. Startled, we open the aching eyes that have scarcely been closed six seconds. Dreams always go by contraries. The bronze of our Dropper-in is more obdurate than the statue's. *He* has not taken his hat: he is embedded in his seat, as though he never meant to trot more. The legs of the chair seem not more a part of it, than his own. Its cushioned arms have grown to his, and become indivisible. What is to be done? We involuntarily answer audibly our inward questions, by a particularly protracted yawn. This luckily has the effect of arousing our remorseless guest from the cozy and unceremonious reverie into which his spirits had subsided. He waves away some of the intervening smoke, stares at us through the partially cleared space, and with inimitable nonchalance exclaims, "You seem sleepy!" Sleepy! it would be gross affectation to deny it. We own the soft impeachment; referring our indulgent friend, for an excuse, to the four o'clock revels of the past fortnight, and apologizing for a wish to get to bed *rather* earlier than usual. "I see, I see," he observes feelingly; "in fact I'm not over-lively myself. I'll just," adds he, considerately, and glancing round at the coal-scuttle, "I'll just sprinkle the fire with a little fresh dust, and then I'll be off." No sooner said than done, and no sooner done than down he sits, with the air, unconscious as he is of having assumed it, but therefore the more dreadful to contemplate; with the air of a visiter who has just dropped in to spend a long evening with us.

While the shock occasioned by this new movement, or rather this new and more desperate resolution to be stationary, is still strong upon us, the clock, never did it seem to strike so loud before, strikes three. Knowledge under some circumstances leads to crime as surely

as ignorance does. We know the clock to be right to a second; but it is impossible to suppress the desire to *lie* in self-defence, and we deliberately indulge ourselves with the emphatic assertion, "that clock is always too slow." Lies are generally thrown away; this promises to be successful, for the enemy intimates that he must get his hat. But does he attempt to stir? Oh! no. "Stand not upon the order of your going, but go *at once*," is the adjuration of Lady Macbeth. But such visiters as our Dropper-in, like that remarkably large American oyster, which required three persons to swallow whole, have too profound a tendency to stay, to go *at once*. It takes such visiters at least three times to go.

It is a host's first duty to attend upon his guest. The Dropper-in in a moment of enthusiasm, when he was quite off his guard, *did* make mention of his hat. This of course is the very last thing that we should be eager to supply at the first call. Nevertheless the allusion to it has escaped, the advantage must be taken, and the hat is produced, gloves included. The production of the latter is perhaps imprudent, for ten minutes are expended in flirting with them, fingering, and drawing them on. But all "reluctant amorous delay" must have an end; no excuse to kill time extends to eternity; and the Dropper-in does make his exit at last—shaking hands with you at twenty minutes past three, with a "good night! I see you are tired. We are both invalids. *I won't keep you up!*"

All but ourselves are in bed. We therefore light him out, bolt the door, and put the chain up. Meditating a spring into bed, we are at the top of the second flight of stairs in an instant; but there we are stopped, and summoned downwards by a knock; not very loud, but administered by a considerate hand, willing to wake everybody in the house, but reluctant to disturb the

people next door, or the sick gentleman over the way. It is our friend returned; he had forgotten his cane.

A very dangerous and dread-awakening species of the Long-stopper is he who drops in soon after dinner and can't stay a minute. There is always a chance that the friend who frankly owns he has come to have out an hour's gossip with you, may go at the end of three; but of the early departure of him who can't possibly stop an instant, there's no hope. If your visiter has a particularly pressing engagement elsewhere, he is sure to stay with you. If he won't take a seat at once, it's all over with you for the evening. If he keeps his hat in his hand, you may ring for your night-cap. He stands, perchance, lolling over the back of a chair for one hour and upwards, filling up a pause every ten minutes with a wilful, lying, hypocritical, "Well, I must go," till down he sits, tossing his hat over to the other side of the apartment, with the look, voice, action, and entire manner of a man who is not at all in a hurry, but feels himself quite at home, and is anxious that you should not put yourself out of the way the least in the world on his account. There is something that amounts to the appalling in this specimen of the tribe. He has no superior in the whole race of familiar fender-breakers. Let him once get his foot near your fireside, and he will tantalize you all the night long; not so much by staying, as by hints of the necessity of going, conjuring up a succession of sad hopes, and mocking you with a hundred visionary departures; himself a fixture, part of the furniture of the room all the time. Of all public orators, save us from him who intimates at the outset that he has risen for the purpose of "making a few brief observations." We don't mind a long speech much; but spare us a few brief observations, for experience teaches us that there is

no end to them. So with the guest with whom time is precious; who has not a moment to stay; who dares not even sit down, because he has an affair of pressing importance on his hands!

It is a thousand chances to one but that a visiter of this class devotes so much of the time he spends with you, as is not occupied by faithless promises to be off, and exclamations touching the impossibility of staying, to the delivery of grave, wise, moral snatches of lectures on the viciousness of sitting up late and giving up too much time to company. The reader hereof, whatever his condition, can doubtless bear testimony to the liability. He must have been, on scores of occasions—and but for gentle sleep he might have heard more—a listening witness to the plaintive apprehension and affectionate concern of an acquaintance, who, from bright sunset to black midnight, has advised him of the enormity of late hours, and the expediency of putting an end to the open-house system without hesitation or delay. Is there any limit to contradiction in human character? There are people who sit up more than half the night, descanting on the folly of not going to bed soon. They wonder how you contrive to keep awake night after night. They couldn't do it, not they. Never were they so sure of anything as that late hours are ruinous to health; and they never yet found that the pocket picked up any grain of treasure by the practice of keeping its mouth so wide open. They are convinced that in the end it will be found destructive both to the liver and the purse. But they really must be going, and beg you to excuse them. However, go they do not, until they have apologised by the hour for the freedom with which they have opened their minds; a freedom which they assure you is the result only of a disinterested and ungovernable friendship. They would

not take advantage of good nature as others do; they understand too well what is due to hospitality; they'd scorn to use any friend so; in their opinion, its turning the finest affections of the heart into a mere convenience! And thus on they dawdle through the drowsy mazes of declamation, making night hideous with their harangues, and provoking you to keep before your half-shut eyes no image of any conceivable thing but the obstinate animal apostrophised in the song—the donkey that wouldn't go. The longer a night-companion of the order of Stoppers is allowed to talk, the deeper he discovers his regard for you to be. If he had some esteem for you when he dropped in at nine, he is ready to swear eternal friendship at half-past two. The mere acquaintance of the evening, becomes Damon and Pythias, "rolled into one" soon after midnight. He is sure to impress one conviction on your mind: that you have known him a very considerable period of time; but the fifteen years of your acquaintance with him dwindles to a span compared with the time seemingly consumed by him in relating the history of friendship. In fact, his affection is interminable; it has no limit: time cannot wither; night cannot chill it: it neither goes out with the fire, nor runs down with the clock. "He loves and loves for ever"; and, to make assurance of the fact double sure, he sits and sits for ever, descanting on the delight of having a friend whose every sentiment, every feeling, corresponds with his own, and with whom it is as impossible to experience fatigue, as it is to communicate it. If he would but change his tune to "He loves and he rides away!" but of that the hope is even yet distant. If he would but follow the example of the trio of lovers slain in the old ballad—

> "There never were three lovers sure,
> Who *sooner did depart.*"

But the ballad is too old ever to have been heard of by him. He takes neither hint nor hat. His tongue runs, but his legs refuse to accompany it. No story, no incident, has sufficient pathos to move him. He stirs not, though an engine dashes by to a capital fire on his road home. Like a monthly nurse, or the French watch that is brought over for you as a great favour, he never knows when to go.

At last, if we are what is called in luck, he recollects that he dropped in some hours before, and was morally and physically unable to stay five seconds. Accordingly, between three and four in the morning, he winds up the tedious and protracted chapter upon friendship, with an appeal to our liberality; a claim upon our indulgence; an assurance that he cannot possibly stay longer, and (which is superfluous) that he would if he could; adding, after a moment's reflection, "but that you know;" a reminder which is followed by the parting announcement, harmonizing miraculously with the announcement volunteered on entering, "In fact, I haven't a moment to stay; *I've an engagement that I can't put off.*" Even then he is not gone; for like the other bore, he is very apt to return in a few minutes. In this case, the snuff-box has been left behind.

The Dropper-in who has a dropper-in to dispose of, is the most desperate of the tribe—the friend who brings *his* friend with him; and who, in order to put the stranger at once on a footing of intimacy, and to incite him to feel thoroughly at ease, proceeds to make the house his own, indulging in friendly pranks and domestic familiarities not dreamt of in ordinary intercourse. In a case of this sort, we are sure to hear a faint and diffident expression of surprise, with a touch of regret, at finding us alone backed by the intimation, "Well, I made myself quite certain that Robinson, at

least, would be here." And then our friend, stealing a glance at his watch, remarks in a side-note to *his* friend, "But it 's early yet: somebody is sure to drop in;" at which *his* friend falls back in his chair and smiles complacently, with an air which says very intellibly, that whether anybody else drops in or not, he feels comfortable enough, and has no idea of perpetrating anything so vulgar as a hasty departure. After a moderate lapse of time, the knocker of the door being still undisturbed, we learn, through the medium of a declaration in very plain English, that our guests —that is to say, our friend and his friend—came with a confident expectation of finding some pleasant company, and passing a pleasant evening. Their disappointment becomes too palpable, and they look as if we had sent them a formal invitation to dinner, and then sat them down to cold veal.

We find that considerable reliance had been placed upon the piano, and some particular song is still expected from some member of the family; and at any rate, they had calculated upon finding somebody to make up a rubber; a rubber, without which they should positively go to bed wretched. This accomplished—partly in politeness, partly in self-defence—by the aid of another dropper-in, our friend's friend becomes ours; or, to speak more strictly, our partner. Not our friend; for he revokes, loses the game, apologises for being absent, and does *not* hear our inward but fervent ejaculation, "I wish you *were*." The cards are, of course, in sheer contempt of yawns and other obstacles, dealt round with persevering regularity until a quarter to six, when, the last pretext for staying being "faded and gone," our friend's friend (the moderate creature!) gently applies his elbow to that of his introducer, and doubtfully—as though half afraid of giving

offence by an early movement—intimates that it is time to go. Hereupon, at one touch of the elbow,

("One touch of mture makes the whole world kin,")

our friend is awakened to a sense of his usual prudent habits, and of his present trespass. "Yes, yes," he mutters assentingly but drowsily, like one who confounds going—with going to bed. "Yes, yes, go! to be sure. What are we staying for? Upon my life I ought to have gone *an hour ago!*" *Exeunt,* at a quarter to six.

Is there any principle in morality like the principle of moderation? "I ought to have gone an hour ago:" in other words, at a quarter to *five* in the morning! How rigid is our self-denial; how uncompromising our views of improvement!—how grand the excess we would lop off; how sweeping the change we would institute; how narrow the limit of enjoyment we would fix! "I ought to have gone an hour ago!" That's the way to reform one's habits, and become reconciled to oneself. Strike off the odd shillings in the heavy account, and let the pounds stand. The camel's back breaks under the burden of the last feather; throw off a feather's weight of vice, and persuade yourself that you are vicious no longer. Scorn gluttony, and take turtle only twice. Shrink from the degrading distinction of being a four-bottle man; drink three and a half and live soberly. Never run into excesses; but go home in good time, at a quarter to five in the morning—instead of six.

One of the greatest hardships we can suffer from the habits of the remorseless Dropper-in arises out of this very consciousness on his part of the necessity of moderation. He is sure, quite sure, to father the excess he has committed upon us, the principal victim to it. That is to say, the blame is made to lie at the door of

the innocent host, and not of the unconscionable guest. The practice, we are bound to admit, is common to all the tribe. They all go away, and visit the sins of the predetermined late-stayer upon the sitter-up against his will. They walk about next day execrating us; for they have a racking headache, perhaps, and they got it in our company. They look half asleep, jaded, faded, and queer as a bit of Cruikshank; and they account for all this by stating where they were last night; adding, "You know their hours! It's disgusting! Pleasant people enough, but there's no such thing as getting away. Coffee at sunrise, when the rest of the world's in bed! No, no, I'm tired of it. A little of that sort of thing is very well—or once in a way—but it's a bore, always. Hang it, I'm no early-pillow-boy myself, I hate running off to bed before one's time; but *they* carry the fun a little too far. There's no help for it but staying away altogether. I shan't go any more." These are the pleasant things that are sure to be said of every victim to immovable visiters; and we warn every such victim that he may esteem himself fortunate if they omit to add certain charitable insinuations—that they think he looks wretchedly ill, that he is evidently killing his wife by his irregularities, and is supposed to have been brought by dissipation into rather embarrassed circumstances!

We say nothing of the more legitimate visits upon a larger scale, paid in town and in country, upon due invitation given and accepted—visits which, meant only to be two days long, are sometimes drawn out into two weeks—as a week's length grows into a month's. The infliction is far less severe in these cases. By the very principle upon which such visits are paid, the host can avail himself of many resources, and effect an escape in many ways. But from the daily or nightly Dropper-

in there is no escape, and the less protracted suffering he occasons is infinitely more tormenting and intolerable. Save us from our friends, then, when they make us doubt that man "never continueth in one *stay*"—when they reverse in practice the old maxim, by rising with the lamb, and going to bed with the lark—passing the interval with us as often as they can catch us at home. But why do they catch us there? Simply because we haven't the face *not* to face them when they call. There are times when none of us would be found at home by any friend, if it were not for the fear of being found out.

MAKING PRESENTS.

One of the charms of Christmas is in the bounty it brings. It is an old constant distinguishing characteristic of the season to exhibit a soul too broad and embracing to be shut in by the narrow though equitable boundaries of commerce; too lavish to throw its heart's wealth into a scale and weigh it out in scruples. It is no period for scant measures, or for bare justice; the cup must overflow. Who ever said at Christmas, "But can't you take *half* a mince-pie?" The spirit of the time is ungrudging, hospitable, generous. It is not the meal of Enough, but the festival of Excess. People, who throughout the long year had given not a crumb, now give dainties and luxuries rarely tasted. People, who never knew anybody to send them a brace of sparrows, now receive, free of carriage, real turkeys, now get an actual goose with seductive and liberal accompaniments. Piles of presents heaped up past all former prodigality;

hampers bursting with their fat bounties; boxes, baskets, bags innumerable, blocking up the way on all sides, constitute at such a time a multitudinous monument to our mortal love of good cheer. The reading now runs—

> Man's generosity to man
> Makes countless thousands glad.

At such a season the common law of debtor and creditor is repealed. It is all give and take. The simple rule is—

> That they should give who have the power,
> And they should take who can.

Less than happy be his new year, who could carp and cavil at the large, free, bountiful, open-hearted, full-handed, gift-scattering philosophy of Christmas.

When last I called on Sir Jasper—(this was said by a friend the other day, who talks for hours, and had then started off upon an allusion of mine to the Art of Making Presents)—Sir Jasper, you know, is of the old family of the Thinskynnes, some of whom are to be met with in every county—he was evidently much ruffled and disturbed. It was a slight expression that betrayed this, and few would have noticed it under his gay, frank manner.

"Something has annoyed you," said I.

He laughed and frowned.

"Yes," replied he, "I am annoyed: much mortified, —almost insulted: and yet I can see no road to redress. I can't send you with a message."

"To whom, for what?"

"No!" cried Sir Jasper, laughing through a flush of anger, "that would be too absurd. So much for the duel remedy. A man shall be injured and affronted

every day, and deeply too, with such insidiousness and dexterity, that satisfaction is impossible."

Sir Jasper Thinskynne thought very little of himself, but a great deal of his family. He was not proud, of a fine mind, a genial and winning disposition, handsome accomplishments, and large possessions; but he was proud of an old vault full of illustrious bones in Dorsetshire. He never valued himself upon the purity and fire of the blood that bounded through one of the most kind and gallant hearts in the world: but he did plume himself upon antiquity of its spring. Sir Jasper was intensely alive to the honours associated with him; but he himself was as the humblest and meekest of the unhonoured, without a particle of conceit or false dignity. Whatever seemed to affect his independence, though touching it but with a needle-point, awakened in him the wildest suspicion and alarm. All kindness in his acts; a kindness shown to him often kindled a jealous impatience, and fell chillingly upon his heart like patronage. He shrank from it, as if it could cloud his honour. To confer upon him a favour, was to wound his sensitiveness with the most cruel and piercing of weapons.

Still, knowing all this well, I had no suspicion of the nature of his grievance, and accordingly inquired concerning the offence and the offender. His look deepened from seriousness to sternness, and resentment flashed steadily in his eyes, as he now, mentioning the name of a man who resided on the other side of his county, inquired if I knew anything of him.

"Yes, I did; knew him for a good sort of fellow, with a good many odd ways; having a good estate, and a liking for doing good after his own fashion."

And what did I suppose he had been doing to Sir Jasper Thinskynne?

"Well, my good friend, having said all that, what do you imagine this man, whom I never saw six times in my life, has been doing with regard to me?"

It was long before I was told; and then it was in a tone of pride and bitterness, and with a tinge, whether of shame or anger, spreading up to the temples, that Sir Jasper slowly uttered the words, "Sir, he has been making me presents—and I am sorry to add, in the most liberal and gentlemanlike spirit."

"Making presents?" I screamed, to save a burst of laughter, which would never have been forgiven.

"Yes, twice—this morning is the second time. What am I to do? I never harmed him, yet he heaps his kindnesses at my door. Never have I spoken ill of him, never thought an injury—yet he insists on laying me under these mortifying obligations."

On inquiring what shot the enemy had fired, it appeared that all the rarities of park, pinery, and preserves, had been inflicted on the unoffending Sir Jasper; and what was worse, everything was managed with an art so nice, that refusal or resentment was difficult, if not impossible.

"After all," I ventured to suggest, "these are not offences to quarrel with very seriously."

"Nor to submit to unconditionally," returned Thinskynne. "As sure as he is at this moment my benefactor, I'll send him up a prize ox to his town-house at Christmas. How else can I relieve myself from this new persecution? The list of my tormentors was long enough before. I, who abhor favours, am doomed to be overwhelmed with them. I, who need none, am rendered miserable with a profusion of kindnesses. What return is to be made, except the return of the gifts that so humiliate me! Nothing goes abroad (proceeded Sir Jasper) without bringing me something

over. Nobody can make purchases without buying me what I don't want. Nobody can possess anything that he wants himself, without sending it to me. Defenceless as I am, I make a show of resistance occasionally, and lock my doors against the assaults of some particular offender; but he defeats me at last. That stupid thing there from India, was twice rejected, yet you see it on the table. Look at these prints, my dear friend, and pity me. Those prints are from a persecutor, against whom I inveterately set my face. I evaded with skill, declined with delicacy, refused with a point-blank explicitness, and a courage that astounded me; but he was untirable in his artifices, he baffled me at last, and the prints are unfortunately mine. See this wretched nic-nac; from no rich giver, but literally forced upon me by a needy hand, in spite of prayers and protestations. Now, what am I to do? I cannot always be getting the rascal's son into the Customs."

"In this case, then," said I, with a gravity under which the ridiculous struggled for mastery, "you had reason to suspect an object—"

"Object!" cried Thinskynne, "why each has his object, such as it is; and if it should happen to be the pure one of devotion and gratitude, the obligation is no less vexatious, the gift no less unacceptable—without a return, which is often rather costly. Do you remember the contest between Salvator Rosa and the Constable Colonna? The painter sent him as a present one of his beautiful landscapes, and the prince, in raptures with the gift, sent Salvator a purse of gold. The painter, re-inspired by such generosity, set his genius to work upon a finer picture, and prayed acceptance of it by the constable, who was again delighted, and returned a second purse. Salvator's enthusiasm kindled once more upon the canvass; but, unhappily, for

another noble landscape another purse of gold was returned. He was not to be outdone in generosity, nor was his princely friend; until, when the sixth landscape was left at the palace, the constable sent back *two* purses, and said he gave in."

"With persecutors like yours, my dear Sir Jasper," replied I, laughingly, "such contests would be ruinous. You would have a dilemma *per diem*. Take this advice therefore: treat these gifts as waifs and strays; torture yourself no more about obligations, meditate no returns, but let the bountiful zeal of this provoking generation of givers burn out of itself. You will find the generous disease not incurable when you cease to stimulate it with gifts, measured according to your own jealous sense of honour and independence."

"Burn out!" exclaimed Sir Jasper; "never while there 's trash to give. You do not know this persevering and pernicious race of present-makers. I can rarely be introduced to a new acquaintance, but in three weeks' time he takes the liberty to be vastly obliging, and has the effrontery to lay one, who never provoked him, under an insufferable obligation. He is repelled, flung back, but of course prevails in the end over a weary antagonist. Does he leave off then? Not while there is a civility to be shown. You must continue to honour the man by your polite acceptance: he, he is the obliged party, and he never can be grateful enough. It is a rule with him. To prove this, he sends you the identical glove worn by a gentleman who had shaken hands with Oliver Cromwell, and he expects in return a handsome salver, but possibly puts up with a teapot. No, no, my friend," pursued Thinskynne, "the fire upon their altars never burns out, and we victims must be content to burn our fingers at it again and again. They have never any lack of that smaller kind of fish

with which herrings are caught. They treat you as if you could only live by voluntary contributions, and a system of barter always settling in their favour; so that it is no wonder if, in a short time, you are at a loss to know the difference between making presents and making bargains."

Sir Jasper's indignation was as little likely to burn out as the interested bounty of his acquaintances, but I broke in here, with the desire to give him advice in his whimsical distresses.

"Give me nothing," he cried, "the smallest donations are thanklessly received."

"Advice is next to nothing; and as mine is not worth having, take it."

"Agreed, on that condition," returned Sir Jasper, "though I never thought to have willingly accepted anything again."

"Are these oddities around us all *presents?* These queer curiosities, these strange-looking pictures, this uncouth, ugly specimen of furniture; those scraps and fragments of something once valuable, perhaps, but worthless now at all events, and so exhibited to view on walls or in corners, as though their owner would fain have them all out of sight, and make a clearing of the lumber; are they presents?"

They were presents, chiefly presents. In library and drawing-room were crowds of these testimonials of Sir Jasper's popularity, the munificence of his friends, and his incapability of refusing a gift. Similar tokens of the world's kindness and partiality were scattered in all parts of the house.

"Presents, principally," sighed Sir Jasper, "but paid for at an extravagant rate. That broken Mercury cost me a diamond ring. Substituted for Washington's brass buckle in its former owner's house, stands a

superb clock; and in exchange for that sham Cuyp, value three guineas and a half, I had the honour of ordering a rather elegant breakfast-service. Some of the rubbish, however, I bought; but the purchases are by far the cheapest portion of the collection. Upon those precious articles which came to me by legitimate sale, which are my own by independent purchase, which I obtained upon an established principle of commercial exchange known to all men, namely, trash for cash; on these I can look without shame, and I never desire my housekeeper to stow them somewhere out of the way; as is the case with my gratuitous treasures; those given curiosities, which have swallowed up half a fortune—the presents, whereon some friends of mine have grown fat, the generous fellows!"

I could not now conceal my surprise at this account of my friend Thinskynne's purchases. What on earth, I asked, could have induced him to buy voluntarily, the very same kind of incumbrances, which he accepted from bountiful donors so reluctantly! Why add, at his own cost, to his useless store of odds and ends, and thus seem to justify the zealous contributions of the beneficent tribe! On what principle had he become a willing purchaser of what he had no liking for, and was already overstocked with.

"You may well wonder," laughed Sir Jasper. "It was on the principle of self-defence, of protection against my friends. I was obliged to become a dabbler to defeat the donors. Take an illustration. A remark had escaped me, perhaps in conversation with some acquaintances, that I had only a modern copy of a favourite author's works, and had never seen the edition of 1712. It was one of those casual observations made daily by thousands of English gentlemen, without the slightest risk of insult or persecution; without remark,

without notice. Sir, such was never my fate in this free country. Within eight and forty hours of my uttering that careless, that unhappy admission, innocent of all intent, behold my servant entering the library, and bearing a most obliging note from a dear friend very slightly known to me, accompanied by a mouldy copy of the edition of 1712, which he was so eminently fortunate as to possess, and of which, with every assurance of lasting esteem, he handsomely entreated my acceptance!"

I sympathised as seriously as possible, and comforted Sir Jasper with the assurance that he was the most ill-used, the most indelicately treated person, figuring in the records of generosity.

"But still, my dear Thinskynne, how does this lead to your policy of buying in self-defence, and purchasing yourself out of the hands of the persecutor?"

"How!" said Sir Jasper; "why, by a direct road, a short cut, but an expensive one to be sure. My dear friend, what in the world was I to do with this civil person's musty copy of the edition of 1712? How could I, with common self-respect, with the most ordinary pride, and the feeling of a gentleman, consent to become the recipient of such a favour, of any favour in fact, from an ordinary acquaintance unknown the other day. Should I at once have sent back the present, and peremptorily forbidden a recurrence of such eccentricities? Assuredly; but alas! I never had courage to take the instant step, lest, by chance, I should grievously offend against a courteous spirit, and wrong a disinterested intention. Well, then, what was I to do with the gift which I could neither keep nor return? See my expedient! I sent instantly in all directions to buy what I did not want, and no stall was unransacked till the book was found. There on my shelf, the next day,

stands the old edition, and joyfully thanking my new friend, I escape the degrading obligation by exultingly pointing to a copy of my own."

It would have been ungracious not to fall in with my friend's humour, by admiring this excellent expedient for baffling the present-makers.

"And so, my dear Sir Jasper, you have actually procured all these odd editions and black-letter rarities, in this same way, and for these sole ends; not to be ranked with the literary, but to be saved from the generous!"

"All but a few of the hundreds you see there, and those few were from remorseless donors," said Sir Jasper, with ludicrous bitterness.

"And if an old volume cost you gold, still it was cheap to you who would have had a present to return?"

"To be sure," cried he, with his gayest chuckle at the recollection. "None of them cost me much, except the score that were given to me. I have sometimes picked up, for three-and-sixpence, a tract which I must have paid for, in a friendly way, at the rate of six volumes of a fine modern author, bound in morocco; and the moth-eaten to me, lawfully obtained for fifteen shillings, would, as a gift from a thoughtful and attentive man, have cost me a set of somethings for little Julia, and perhaps a bracelet for mamma. My dear fellow, there is no gift so cheap as a purchase; but if you have a taste for being ruined, encourage your acquaintance to give. Do you want to get things for nothing? buy. Do you want them at an expensive rate? Ah, then we must make you a few presents!"

Thinskynne had now talked himself so far out of the mental distemper into which the unexpected present of the morning had thrown him, to join cordially with me in a laugh over his advice. "But come," said I, "it

is you who are advising me, and declining my advice before I can give it."

"Give, then," cried he, "while you may, the only thing I would allow you to give me."

"You wish to extinguish for ever this spirit of munificence? You desire to get rid at once of all your benefactors—"

"Yea, and of their benefactions!" groaned Sir Jasper.

"Stop," cried I, "are you for ejecting, scattering and flinging abroad, the gifts you have already received, these tokens you have lodged—"

"Every one," exclaimed he. "Can I have a moment's tranquillity or independence until they are all gone! I see you don't know half the agonies of my condition. The shock to my feelings, and the drain on my fortune, you have heard something about; but think of the assaults on my daily peace. What man can live in serenity with presents in the house! Why the right of ownership never seems to desert those people quite. They esteem themselves privileged to drop in, and see how you have disposed of their presents: whether the daub is in a good light, and the label (with the donor's name) still attached to Newton's tobacco-stopper. Sir, this is far from being all; they are privileged by the same law (written somewhere on brass) to bring in an acquaintance as they pass by on their rambles, just to show him the trifle they were so fortunate as to secure your acceptance of. All this is true; these donors, by the act of giving, gain a key to your private apartments for ever. One of them came yesterday to show his companions that imposter on a bracket yonder. He walked about crying, 'Yes, there it is! A fine work: a thing, sir, that our friend here once did me the great honour to accept!' But the

scoundrel never hinted that a few days after he had fastened it upon me, he did me the great honour to accept a hunter."

Here was another feature of the complicated distress, but, luckily, this new grievance, like the rest, was removable by the same plan.

"Now, Sir Jasper," I began, "you must perceive that these generous people have been drawn about you chiefly by the tact which you have unhappily evinced in your gratitude. Donors sometimes make the first point of consideration, what it may be convenient to give, not what it may be desirable to accept. Unlucky Sir Jasper, with your native delicacy of feeling, you have reversed this rule. Shrinking from obligation, you gave largely; and bent on obliging, in place of being obliged, you exactly fitted your presents to the persons. They brought to you anything they happened to have; whatever chanced to be knocked down without competition at the last auction for vanities. With you, therefore, they left what was useless, and from you they received the very presents they most wanted. Now, Sir Jasper, we must act upon their plan, though we shall not find our generosity so profitable. You must give them what you don't want, and what they don't want, and what nobody does want. Give them your treasures! Scatter their own gifts among them! only taking care that nobody receives back that identical relic amongst the rubbish which he himself presented, and which now entitles him to a bounty commensurate with his own."

Sir Jasper, for a man of some claims to refinement, was a little "uproarious," and, for a gentleman rather starched in manner, abundantly elastic and pliable of limb. Perhaps he dreamed he was dancing. But it was with vigorous arms that he embraced me, and with

a loud voice that he exclaimed, "I 'll do it to-morrow, and that day shall be the happiest of my life!"

How politely we forwarded the shoe of the hind foot of Bucephalus to the man who had presumed to present bad claret under the pretence of its being nowhere procurable; how we despatched the wig of Martin Luther to that sweet, shrewd young lady who had so charmingly condescended to work Sir Jasper a cravat, for the mere pleasure of working it; how we sent the screaming, biting maccaw as an appropriate present to that nervous benefactor who had forwarded the patent toothbrush, and was spelling for a twenty-guinea chair; this is not to be dwelt upon, because readily imagined. Nothing went in a direction where there was a possibility of its being desirable. Every present was of course chosen by the rule of unfitness; and those who were most ready to accept were sure to get what was least acceptable. The relics, curiosities, and furniture which Sir Jasper's patrons had considered so valuable, were now estimated at their true worth, and there was scarcely a gift which he bestowed, but was pronounced to be "rubbish," and regarded as something approaching to an insult. They were all in a story—"What could he mean by sending such vile trash to *them!*" Yet these were their own donations, lately of inestimable value.

Thus is Sir Jasper giving, with every gift he makes, secret offence, and driving away his generous persecutors. He is in a fair way to breathe at last in perfect independence, and free from obligation. But being in high spirits, it is difficult to restrain him from expressing his gratitude to his new Dorsetshire benefactor, by sending a prize ox, to be delivered at his town-house in Upper Brook-street, with Sir Jasper's grateful regards.

THE RECENT MEETING OF THE COINAGE AT THE ROYAL MINT.

(EXCLUSIVE REPORT.)

A SHORT time ago, upon the completion of the HALF-FARTHING in the Royal Mint, a full meeting of all the members of the Coinage of Great Britain was therein convened, for the purpose of introducing and installing that newly-created diminutive. The general body assembled early, but the higher coins arrived late; and although they were received with every mark of respect by their humbler brethren, it was clear that they were by no means delighted with the occasion on which they were summoned. The double and treble Sovereign caused, on their entrance, a profound sensation; but when the Five-pound piece made his appearance, the vast weight of that coin, and the broad flood of golden light which he diffused, invested him with a dignity and splendour truly dazzling. Having, with a look of heavy, haughty grandeur surveyed the mixed assembly, he took the chair, which shook as he sunk into it.

The coins present being called over according to their rank, were duly weighed, approved, and admitted, and took their seats in council. The Half-farthing was then summoned, that he might be examined, weighed, named, and received into the Coinage. Previous to these proceedings:

The SOVEREIGN rose, and was greeted with repeated rings of applause. He presumed (he said) to address a few words to the assembled Coinage, of which he had the honour to be an unworthy member, prior to the introduction of that new coin, which, he believed, had been just created; some strange coin, of such excessive

minuteness, that difficulty had been found in designating it. He spoke without prejudice; he had much respect for both his silver and copper brethren; but was such an addition to their illustrious order required? Was the coin, whatever its value, of which he absolutely knew nothing, wanted? The question could not possibly affect *him*. As the first practical coin of Britain, he was as far above its influence, as were his noble and ancient friend the GUINEA, and those other elder coins, who, though practically useless, he was always happy to see admitted into that high council, as gold coins in their own right. Thus disinterested, he would ask, were the heads of the Coinage to be troubled about such a trifle? Might not the installation be dispensed with altogether? (Sensation.)

The GUINEA (who spoke from the side benches) here craved the courtesy of the Modern Coinage, for permission to say one word, but admitting he had no right. His noble friend had alluded to him as "practically useless:" that remark was of rather more interest to him than the creation of a Half-farthing. (A laugh.) He was a very old coin; he had been called in; but he had yet work to do, and he did it—did it daily, thank Heaven! (Hear.) His young friend, the Sovereign, was a practical coin, true; very useful in trading and commercial affairs. But where was he on the great occasions which ennobled man? Who was the munificent contributor to public charities? (Cheers.) It was the Guinea! (Loud cheers.) Let the Sovereign go to the Freemason's Tavern, and test with, after dinner, the popularity of the two coins. (Hear.) Let him look to the long tables battered with applauding knife-handles, and say, who is the author of those honourable scars, the practical Sovereign or the unforgotten Guinea! (Cheers, and "order.")

The SOVEREIGN must interfere with one word more. He knew his venerable predecessor was popular with the benevolent, and with persons, too, who were not benevolent. Authors, for example, were partial to that coin, and he wished they might always get it; so, too, were physicians and barristers. But it was no less an injustice to him (the Sovereign). As the leading coin of the realm he did complain, that he could rarely attend at the London Tavern or the Freemason's, though for the noblest purposes, without having a vulgar shabby shilling clapped to his back—(order, and great excitement)—as though he was short weight! (Cheers and order.)

The GUINEA again rose to say—(Spoke! spoke! chair!)

The SOVEREIGN would not be interrupted by his noble friend. He would insist it was not, in fact, guineas that were given, but a hundred and five sovereigns—or, as the case might be, one sovereign and a shilling. (Cries of order.)

Here the PENNY came forward in a frank, bold manner, and said he was a plain but useful coin, and had a right to speak. He thought this personal altercation between two coins of high rank disreputable, and only worthy of— (the names mentioned were drowned in laughter and applause).

The SHILLING now started up, and was received with a loud clatter by the silver and copper coinage, marking his great popularity. He looked paler than usual, and demanded to know what he had done that he should be insulted, in the presence of the whole collected coinage, by the Sovereign? (Hear.) He had been described as a vulgar, shabby coin, tacked to a sovereign's back to make up weight—to make a sham guinea. (Shame.) It was for him (the Shilling) to complain; for in all

those donations, he was roughly cast in as a make-weight, and treated with scorn. But he was cast up in the sum total! (Cheers.) The treasurer always counted the insulted coin! (Cheers.) He wished to nail the Sovereign to the argument.

The SOVEREIGN said, in a low tone, that the honourable coin might be nailed to the counter for what he cared. (Shame, and great confusion.)

The PENNY again came forward from the low benches, amidst a cry of "Spoke." He said, in very loud tones, I am too sturdy to mind that cry. The Shilling is of the middle class, and not of mine; but he has been unworthily treated, and I propose three cheers for him. (Cheers from the silver and copper coins.) And now, Sir President of the Coinage, I say, as a coin second to none in antiquity, and the head of my copper order, that we have a duty to discharge this day towards a new member of the British Coinage; towards a little stranger of my own honest though humble metal; and I now move that the Half-farthing be summoned to appear in this honourable Court of Coins. (Cheering, and cries of "Bravo! Pennypiece.")

President, in a rich, heavy, golden tone, "Call in the Half-farthing!"

The HALF-FARTHING here briskly slipped in while the door was yet only ajar. The whole meeting bent forward to look at their new brother, and seemed greatly amused at his smallness. The higher members pretended they could not see him at all. As the pretty little coin, perfect in all his parts, and fresh from the die, bowed to the court, a general laugh ran round. It was observed that the Farthing especially could not restrain his laughter, though he was bright-red with anger all the time.

The question was then, after some ceremony, put to

the meeting, "Had any coin of the realm an objection to the admission of the Half-farthing?" For a minute no coin spoke. The Sovereign was silent, and all downwards; all down to the Farthing himself, who now rose to oppose the introduction.

There was commotion in the court, and some disgust. The FARTHING rose, he said, as an independent Member of the Coinage. He was delighted with what that noble Sovereign had said, and was hurt and surprised at the disloyal feeling shown to that truly splendid coin. (No, no.) He said, yes. He was for ejecting the Half-farthing with scorn; (a laugh); he spurned him as a pretender, and would have no half-measures in his ancient family! Poor little miserable aspirant. (Laughter.) Well, it was laughable! Himself and the Five-pound piece had hitherto been the boundaries of the Coinage. (Hurrah!) This was a democratic innovation; an extension of the copperage. (A laugh.) The race of Farthings should not be disgraced! (Never.) (The Five-pound-piece, who had hitherto been unmoved, here shook his yellow solid sides with laughter.)

The PENNY now jumped up with a great sound. He said, Coins of the three metals, Gold, Silver, and Copper! I can only say with Falstaff, 'an I'm not ashamed of my company, I'm a soused gurnet.' (Laughter.) And I pray you, notwithstanding what the Farthing has said about the *two* boundaries of the Coinage, at once to admit as a legitimate British coin, my bright, promising, useful little friend, the Half-farthing.

Before the question was put, the HALFPENNY humbly asked leave to speak, as the matter related to his metal. He hailed with pleasure the introduction of his minute ally, and was sure that the new coin would live to be a friend to the poor, with reference to trading transactions. He would not believe that charity would avail

itself of such an expedient to reduce the scale of its contributions. He, the Halfpenny, had a right to speak to this point; being a coin, and he took pride in it, very often bestowed by a poor, worn mechanic on a beggar still worse off. (Hear.) He never felt ashamed of himself on such occasions. (Cheers for the Halfpenny; given by the ill-paid artisan to the destitute.)

The motion was then carried by acclamation; and the Court of Coins, after some formal business, was about to break up, the principal body of the members being desirous of going at once into circulation, when order was restored, and every seat resumed on the SOVEREIGN presenting himself to address the assembly. That shining member of the court could not permit it to separate without the apologetic remark, that if he had turned a bilious countenance to his fellow coins, or looked with a jaundiced eye upon the Guinea, it was but the error of a moment. He knew his friend's sterling worth and renown, and it was clear there never could be any great difference between a Guinea and a Sovereign!

The GUINEA gracefully bowed. He merely ventured to regard himself as a Sovereign with a silver shadow at his side. A knight was equally grand whether formally attended by his esquire or not. And the two coins exchanged the yellowest looks of confidence and friendship.

Other members however indicated, by restless motions, and much ringing and rattling, a disposition to prolong the discussion; and one of the nimblest of them all, being also the smallest, leaped higher than the rest, and obtained a moment's hearing. This was the FOURPENCE. He briefly complained of having been designated a "fourpenny *bit*," as though he were incomplete, and had no independent existence. He claimed to be

received by the whole world on the terms accorded to his elder brother, the Sixpence. Asserting his respectability, he contended that into low hands it was rarely his fate to fall. Cabmen, for example; was a cabman ever known to be in possession of a Fourpence? (Hear.)

Here the leading member of the Silver Coinage presented himself to the notice of the Court. What coin, he asked, if personal complaints were to be permitted, had greater grievances than he had! As the CROWN-PIECE he was entitled to the sympathy of the whole Coinage. He exceeded all in bulk: he would yield to none in solidity and weight of character; but he knew of no brother of the high patrician class, or of the copper tribe below, that had been so ill-used. (Explain.) Was there a steadier coin going? And yet he was associated everywhere with convicted drunkenness. (Hear.) Five shillings had become inseparably connected with intoxication, and his name was thus identified with a nuisance. (No.) Though his lustre might be tarnished, his value should be undiminished.

The HALF-CROWN ventured to suggest that his great leader a little exaggerated these evil consequences. Look to the ill-association in which he (the Half-Crown) had fallen; see how he had been treated by the medical men. Why, a Half-Crown was but another word for "the mixture as before;" and yet he found people extremely well disposed to take him. (Laughter.)

The SHILLING, with great deference to his two silver seniors, begged to ask if their cases were as grievous as his own! See what aspersions, what imputations were by like usages cast upon him. He had been degraded to the price of an oath, as though his honest word was not to be taken; as though he were a rank counterfeit, and required to be so nailed down. He was the pet coin of the oath-taker, of the perjurer. (Shame.) No

lawful piece of silver could like that; he would take his oath of it, although he had to pay himself into court the next minute.. (A laugh.)

Here it was announced that several combinations of coins, or odd sums of money, hearing that a court was being held, were waiting outside the door, anxious to represent their grievances to that tribunal, and praying to be admitted for such purpose. Several of the court rose in succession to protest against this irregularity; but other coins of ample value contended that the whole discussion was too irregular to permit such a ground of objection; and a resolution that a specimen of this class of complainants be called in was carried.

Hereupon a miscellaneous and suspicious-looking set of pieces were admitted, and announced as MESSRS. SIX and EIGHTPENCE, amidst a cry of "Hear," and much mock gravity. They complained that a stigma had been cast upon their characters. It was their destiny, they said, to have become associated, at an early period, when the oldest inhabitant was a little boy, with the common-law of their country, and bitterer they believed were their injuries than those of any individual coin in that pure metallic presence. They were the victims of the law, or of those who warped the law to the purposes of costs. They were innocent instruments in the hands of lawyers for plundering the community according to the best precedents. They were themselves looked upon as swindlers, and their reputation was irretrievably ruined, for nobody heard of Six and Eightpence but with disgust. Now they were ready to attend, consult, and advise—

The PENNY once more appeared, and moved that these complaints were irrelevant. The Coinage had evils of their own, and could not redress the grievances of particular sums of money. They might next expect

the HALF-GUINEA to complain of damage to his moral character, he being the price of admission to the Opera pit. For himself he had no complaints; but he had one boast. It was his pride and glory to have his name in later days associated with the Postage! That was honour enough for him, and he begrudged neither to gold nor silver a just popularity.

Loud cheers, in the midst of which the Court of Coins finally broke up; and the chief members, hurried into circulation, were, in a very short period, miles away from the Royal Mint.

NO CONCEALMENTS!

A DOMESTIC DILEMMA.

IT was agreed between us before we married, nay, it was made a *sine quâ non* on both sides, and established as a Mede-and-Persian matrimonial law, that there were to be "no concealments between us!" As many confidences as we could contrive to secure by and for each other, but no secret unshared. What I knew, she was to know; what she heard, I was to hear. Our eyes and ears, our hearts and souls even, were to be eyes, ears, hearts, and souls, in common.

We might have our little mistakes now and then, brief controversies, momentary dissensions even, transparent shadows flitting between us and felicity, like thin fleecy clouds over the moon's face that rather embellish than obscure the light, but there was to be no mystery. We were not to pretend to throw open our whole hearts to the very inmost recesses, and then lock up one particular chamber better worth peeping into, perhaps, than all the rest. No; we were to have no

reserved key, but be free to pry into everything, Bluebeardisms and all.

And admirably the system worked. "Marianne," said I, "you know you are at full liberty to ransack my writing-desk at all hours; there can be nothing there or elsewhere that I should conceal from you. Any letters of mine, as soon as they arrive, you are free to open, only taking care to place them in my letter-case, that I may be sure to see them. Or if they should come first into my hands, you would only find them open instead of sealed, that's all the difference."

"And I'm sure," would be the reply, "I shall always be as unreserved with you. I should never dream of receiving any letter, and then locking it up, or hiding it. If it only enclosed a milliner's bill, I should bring it to you."

"Thank you, my dear. Charming confidence!"

It certainly worked admirably for a long while—two or three months—and might have been quite a perfect system, only we had bound ourselves by such solemn vows to have no concealments from one another, that conscience was rarely quite at ease, and sometimes felt its rose-leaves a little rumpled and uncomfortable, when happening to call to recollection some trifling affair that had never been communicated, for the simple reason that it had never been remembered.

As for myself I cannot say that I was so much a victim to sensibility, thus wrought upon by a too literal reading of the bond into which we had both entered; Marianne was the principal martyr.

Sometimes, perhaps, I found her looking at me at breakfast with almost half a tear in each eye, her coffee getting cold, and her newspaper (containing possibly a breach of promise, or even a murder) unread. After scalding my throat with my hot second cup in a natural

emotion of surprise, as well as anxiety to know what was the matter, I discovered that she did not feel "quite right," but rather as if she were intentionally suppressing a fact which I had a claim to know; that she was quite sure she had no motive for concealment, and was even unconscious of having a secret, until she woke up in the night thinking about it; and really, then, foolish as it was, she could not help crying about it too; for of this she was certain, that there could be no affection where there was concealment.

And what was the mighty secret after all?

"Oh, no! you mistake me. It is no mighty secret, far from it; for they are only mere acquaintances, the Pimbles, though pleasant people enough; but I fancied the concealment might look intentional. It is something Mrs. Pimble told me the other day when we dined there. There is a probability of her girl marrying; yes, so she says; pretty well; an India man; but I believe the event will not take place these ten months."

"Oh, well, if that's all, the secret was not a mighty one. I could have waited the ten months for the news, and you know I should have been sure to have heard it then."

"That's very true, my dear; but then, you know, in the meantime, concealment——"

Such sensibility could not be too tenderly estimated; and when I looked round my little world of friends, and my wide universe of acquaintances, delightful, indeed, was the contrast which this candour and openness presented. In all directions I could hear family phrases flying about, such as—"My wife knows nothing of this;" or, "You need not mention it before Edward;" or, "There is no occasion to tell Jane things of this kind;" or, "He hates to hear about such matters, so

not a syllable, if you please;" while we, in our little matrimonial sanctum, had set up a confessional for all innocent communications, and as often as we had anything to say, and a good deal oftener, to that we could repair for a blissful interchange of confidence.

It was necessary to give a thought occasionally to the chilling reserve discernible in families around us, for so I could afford to think less of the trifling inconveniences attendant upon our own system. Every day brought with it a half dozen small secrets for Mrs. Shallowlove to hide from her husband; "matters that for her part she had no idea of telling S. about;" but, on the contrary, every day brought to my ears, fresh from the innocent lips of my wife, a hundred absurdities which there was no earthly occasion to mention to anybody.

"Oh, you are here, are you! I have only just six words; when you have finished your letters will do."

"No, Marianne, now; I'm ready to listen," and my pen would be laid down, of course.

"Presently would do as well, but I wished to tell you that I have heard from mamma——"

"Yesterday, my love. She was quite well, all was going smoothly, and she had nothing to communicate, you told me."

"Yes, but I have heard again from her this morning; half an hour ago; only I have had no opportunity of telling you, and I can't bear anything to be dwelling on my mind. Here is her letter, you can read it. She has no intelligence to add to that she sent yesterday, and has therefore nothing to say."

"Oh!"

"Oh, and I never told you that Mr. Duckit has left his house——"

"Was his house to let, Marianne? I didn't know——"

"Yes. Oh, yes, his house was to let; and he has now let it, I am told; the fixtures taken at a fair valuation. Besides that, it seems he means to retire from business, and sell his Canadian property."

"Ah, very well, Marianne; I suppose he knows his own business, whatever it is, though we scarcely know *him* but by sight."

"No, to be sure, we know nothing of him, only I thought I wouldn't conceal——Oh, and that little Miss Elderby, a chattering thing; she has just been here, and I fancied you would wonder what in the world she could be telling me——"

"Not I, indeed; and I hope you don't think it necessary——"

"Yes, but I do; though there 's really little or nothing to tell, except that Dr. Quick has had notice this morning to be in attendance at the Rectory" (a little cough here); "the rector prays for a little girl, as they have but eight; but I understand his wife's wishes in that respect are not exactly his."

"I heartily wish, my dear, that both parties may be gratified; and now, if you have no objection, I 'll finish my letter."

"To be sure, certainly; indeed I have nothing to add, nor should I have communicated all this, and certainly not the particulars last mentioned, relative to affairs at the Rectory, only I am of opinion that where there is concealment——"

It was natural that I should contract, to some extent, the same habit; and I at first found myself gravely relieving my mind of a multitude of insignificances daily, the smallness of which made them a tremendous burden to bear. Perhaps some event undisclosed, unconfided, concealed, suppressed within my own bosom, has been recollected after quitting the

house to take my morning stroll; and the door has been opened again, that I might mention the interesting fact——

"I quite forgot to apprise you, Marianne, of a step which I conceived it right to take two days ago. I have ordered a new hat, as you rather object to the shape of this; and I would not have you be taken by surprise."

"Or perhaps, when she was just starting on her own trip, I called her back to say: "About the county-asylum, to which I talked of subscribing a couple of pounds. Dearest Marianne, that there may be no concealment in anything between us two, I now mention to you, that I have made it guineas!"

But this scrupulousness on my side soon vanished, and I began to find that I had nothing in the world to communicate, unless an affair of consequence had happened. Not so my wife; there is no end to the feminine conscience under the influence of affection.

It was a little inconvenient to be aroused out of my after-dinner nap, for the mere purpose of receiving a proof that she had nothing to conceal, contained in a demonstration that she had nothing to disclose. But it was still worse, when, in the midst of a fiery discussion at the club, to be summoned down to the door, and to find Marianne's eager, honest face gleaming with a piece of intelligence which she felt it wicked to withhold.

"My darling creature," I cried, "such anxiety and confidential devotion makes the very heart speak within one! "My darling creature, so you have something to say, and came here that I might not lose——"

"Yes, to be sure; and so I thought we would drive round this way, for I can keep nothing to myself. The rector's disappointed—it's a boy!"

We never had, however, the least syllable of com-

plaint between us to check the course of mutual confidence; unless it might be thought to come in the form of a small exclamation of surprise, now and then, from the lips of Marianne, at accidentally discovering some insignificance which I had omitted to mention at the confessional.

"And so," Marianne would cry, "you met Mr. Walker the other day! He told me last night, when he came and sat by me, that he had seen you lately!"

"Walker! yes, to be sure, I met him a fortnight ago in Pall Mall!"

"You never told me!"

"My dear, I forgot it before I reached home."

"How strange! Now I should have told *you!*"

That she would.

"When you asked that gentleman in the blue stock to sing last night, you praised his fine voice; I never knew you had heard him before."

"Yes, my dear, I dropped in one night, you may remember, in Wimpole-street, when there was a little music going on. He sang there."

"Really! and so he sang *there!*" cried Marianne. "Well, I never knew that till now!"

But I must confess, that about the end of the first twelvemonth of our married life, Marianne, perhaps for want of a real grievance, began to imagine one. No, it did not amount to that either. I should rather say, that she took a needless objection to one family group amongst our acquaintances, and cherished a mild dislike which our system of candour and open confession would not of course permit her to conceal.

There *was* something a little peculiar in the tone of the people, that gave a kind of excuse to her objections. I had not known them long, not at all intimately, yet they wrote to me as to an old friend. As often as

Marianne glanced over a letter of theirs, the foolish fluttering thing (never must she see this page!) felt half inclined to tear it, as an unwarrantable and impertinent freedom. There were some young girls too in the case, all monstrous innocent, but giddy as wild birds, and Marianne in fact did not at all like their chirping.

I naturally did what I could to discourage the intimacy, but that was not so easy to accomplish delicately. The letters would come now and then, and my wife would glance over them as usual, lest, as she truly observed, it should appear that she in the least minded such frivolity.

One evening, returning home after a short ramble, I found on the table some parcels of books and papers, which had arrived for me during my absence. Marianne made some reference to them as matters I had anticipated, and left me to open, search, and peruse. Underneath them, on the table, I then found a post-letter, directed in a handwriting not unknown, yet not familiar to me. It was from one of my lively freedom-loving friends; the well-meaning, but not over-refined correspondent, whose gaiety had caused many a little shadow to creep over the fair brow of my Marianne.

This letter I read, and then read again, and then laid it down with a feeling of regret not unmixed with anger. I felt that my correspondent had no right, by any conceivable law of feeling or privilege of society, to address me in a manner so mistakeable. I was then associated with their dearest friends; nay, it might have been supposed that I was their near relative, and that I had known them for years was a thing legible in every line!

They commanded rather than invited my presence; I *must* join them in their excursion; it was all settled; my excellent friends the ——s, and ——s, whose names I could not have spelt, and whose faces I should not

know; Wednesday morning early; magnificent scenery, soul-stirring associations; invigorating breezes, wild freshness of nature; delightful arrangement, party perfectly Bocaccian. Not a word about my wife. I did think it cool, and it heated me accordingly.

But its effect on me was of no consequence! what would be its effect on the mind of Marianne! So familiar was the tone and style of the epistle, so absurdly inconsistent with the account I had always given, that although I feared not its power to work any unkind suspicion in her mind, I knew well that it would disturb and annoy her. Perfectly blameless as I was, it must yet seem, so very free was my correspondent, that I had, insensibly, inadvertently encouraged the unaccountable familiarity. I resolved, after a minute's consideration, to spare her the annoyance. Why should she, angel that she was (and *is*, whether she should chance to see this paper or not!), be even a momentary sufferer by such impertinence! But how to take in safety this first step into the dark regions of secrecy! how to manage the first violation of our compact! how to effect my First Concealment!

Mark, ye married youth, that ye may avoid! I said I was blameless, and yet I must needs turn schemer, and work with the tools of guilt.

The letter, having been found under the packets, had been unobserved by me until their removal. Marianne had made no mention of it, the seal was unbroken; perhaps she had not seen it at all. What then so easy? I would burn it at once. Not so; stop! If she had not seen the letter itself, she must have heard the postman's knock; our house was not so large (how the family has increased!), and she knew that *a* letter had been left. To put it aside, to *half*-hide it for the evening, would, if she should chance to notice its absence, or spy the

epistle itself, look most awkward and suspicious. It would denote my consciousness of something, and deprive me of the power of explaining anything. I should be convicted of a desire to conceal, without profiting by my guilt.

The thought struck me; yes, I had it. Happily the letter, though from the same family party, was not from the same *person* who had frequently written; and even if Marianne had seen it, it was unlikely that she had recognised the hand. Forth from my pocket I drew a letter which I had brought from the club; it was from Tom Jones, of St. John's, to come and smoke with him. Triumphantly drawing Tom's letter from its envelope, and performing the same operation with respect to the new comer, I placed the jolly smoker's summons in the envelope of my objectionable correspondent, thrust one into my pocket, and threw the other carelessly on the table. There it lay! To all appearance, the very same, save and except its broken seal, that I had found there! *That* was the letter just left by the postman! What a masterpiece of policy.

I felt, at the moment, that I ought at least to get a secretaryship to an embassy from the government. My talents had been sadly thrown away; buried alive under heaps of honesty!

While thus pleasantly musing, wandering as I may say between Constantinople and Madrid, Marianne entered. I was then deeply busied in my books and papers. There lay the *clever* deception; the innocent, the criminal epistle; the sheep in wolf's clothing. My Marianne, after a minute or two, approached the table, and took it up. I never raised my eyes, nor seemed conscious of the action. There was silence, broken but by the rustling of my papers. "Yes," thought I, "you may read with quiet nerves; you cannot know how

cunningly I have contrived to spare you an annoyance!"

No sooner had the thought been conceived, than a faint moan, a low cry of fright and pain, startled my inmost soul. I looked up, and saw my wife's face perfectly white—

"The lively blood had gone to guard her heart."

Her limbs trembled; fear and anguish were diffused all over her, and she dropped at my feet. I could not speak, surprise kept me dumb, and her feelings first found a voice.

"Oh! what have I done? and what have you done? That is not the letter, but the envelope only. The child, your little nephew, was in the room when it came, and before I could see what he was doing, had seized it and found one side of the cover open—see, here it is—he read the name of the writer, I saw not a word, but only know from whom it came. Oh, why this mystery, this dreadful deception? What am I to think, what fear, what suffer!" And then she sank powerless upon my knees.

A hundred feelings crowded stiflingly into my heart at that instant, but assuredly a silly feeling was uppermost. I had not the emotion of a rascal, of a hypocrite; but I am able to announce to the public in general that the feeling of an enormous fool is a singularly disagreeable one.

Evasion would have been meanness, madness—besides it was impossible; and with crimsoned cheeks, I instantly fell to my confessions. I explained all in ten words. I drew the real letter, that infernal well-intentioned missive, from my pocket. I convinced her that there was nothing in it, and that I had been betrayed into the most intense folly by anxiety for her, by respect

for her very mistakes, by disinterested fondness and affection.

And she believed as readily as she doubted. Well might she doubt, and well might she believe. From that moment, good or evil, there have been NO CONCEALMENTS.

A LATE TOUR IN SEARCH OF THE PICTURESQUE.

"THEY are, indeed, a lovely pair," said I, when the dining-room door had closed upon good, quiet Mrs. Sharpson and her elderly maiden sister, and with the intimation that coffee would be ready in half an hour, we had been left alone with our glasses and nut-crackers.

"Yes, they are, indeed, a most lovely pair!"

But the rapturous remark was not applied (I am ashamed to say) to the two reserved and respectable ladies who had just quitted the room. It was addressed, with considerable fervour of emphasis, to a pair of small pictures which smiled upon me in a favourable light from the opposite wall, as I drew my chair to the left side of the fire to match the position of Sharpson on the right.

"You were devouring them all dinner-time," said he, "and your hunger doesn't appear to be in the least abated. What is it you see in them? They are but sketches, you know."

"What do I see in them? Form, colour, elevated grace, ideal beauty, sublime simplicity, and power. The girl there, with her patches of loose drapery which the wandering air of heaven might blow about as it listeth, was born under a loftier and lovelier star than the conscious wearer of the rarest laces and satins which Chalon ever took pains to paint. The old woman, on

the other bit of canvas, may have been Phocion's mother, or a sibyl, or an empress by divine right. There she sits; whether on an old oak-tree root, or in a carved chair, or on a broken column amidst the ruins of an empire, I can't make out; the scene may be a tangled wood, a wild moor, or a castle hall; but she is sitting on a throne braver than Cleopatra's. What wondrous riches may not the fancy work out of that endless mine, the Obscure! How captivating and ethereal are the beauties which Art, pausing in her elaborate work, only ventures to indicate by a magic touch!

"Sketches!" I continued, "yes, verily as you say, these things before us are but sketches, yet they are perfection. The imagination of the painter has outstripped his hand; the genius has been too quick and subtle for the mechanical process; a grand effect flashes out of utter darkness upon the searching eye, kindling and rewarding the sensibilities of the inquirer; and Art, not satisfied indeed, yet charmed, hazarded no further effort, but dropped her useless tools. Wise distrust, or, if you will, inspired laziness, of the painter, that refused to finish the designs! Great master of the rare art to forbear! Here, in this splendid smear, and again in that dazzling smudge, we discern all that his soul contemplated, and possibly much more than his skill, exercised for half an age, could have expressed."

"Ay, ay," said Sharpson, quietly cracking a walnut, "you needn't tell me, I know all about it. Times and places are everything to people who set themselves up as oracles upon art. The things they were in raptures with yesterday, are daubs to-day; and the same picture which, if sold as trash amidst the lumber of an old farmhouse, or the rubbish of a country inn, they wouldn't bid three-farthings for, they would hold to be deuced fine and cheap at three hundred pounds if they

saw it in the Grosvenor collection! I know all about it. Take some wine, and then push it this way."

As I well knew my old companion was always a little sarcastic upon any exhibition of enthusiasm; for this reason, perhaps, that he had himself, between the ages of fifteen and fifty, experienced at least a dozen fits of enthusiasm in relation to as many arts or pursuits; book-collecting at one time, picture-seeking at another, and moth-catching at a third; learned in horses now, deep in experimental chemistry next year, and then engineering more eagerly still; over the ankles in gardening to-day, and up to the neck in farming to-morrow—aware, I say, that his life had been one successive scene of enthusiastic fits, and that his present cue was to deride enthusiasm and to doubt its sincerity, I was not in the least offended at his sarcastic tone, and the smile delicately edged with a sneer that followed his remark.

"What!" I exclaimed, "you astonish me beyond expression. You, the possessor of those masterly sketches, to disparage them! to doubt their effects! to suppose their beauty may be before the eye and not seen, presented to the sense and not felt! For my own part, had I met them on the plains of Indostan, I had worshipped them."

"Had you met them," returned Sharpson, pushing back the port, "at an old rag-shop in Leather-lane, with 'for sale, seven-and-sixpence' chalked upon their sublimity; had you seen them hanging upon the white-washed walls of the Stag's Head, amidst portraits of winning horses and prize oxen, with samplers by youthful human prodigies more astonishing still, you should have examined them for an hour without discovering a beauty. The fat heifer weighing one-tenth of Smithfield-market, or the correct likeness of Mr. Smash's blood-mare

'Bolt,' you would regard with some interest, and forgive the villanous picture in consideration of its being what it professes to be. But the sublime and beautiful in my sketches, would never have flashed out upon you from those obscure walls. Expecting nothing poetical in so unlikely a nook, you would discern no genius on the smeared canvas; you would think them the *failures* of the man who painted the sign outside the house; and would either laugh at the absurd beginnings for their downright burlesque, or scorn them for the impudence of their pretension. I'll trouble you for the salt."

"And you really think that *I* should—I, who—"

"You, who go to the exhibition every year, and drop into the National Gallery or the Dulwich once in three, or as often as a sight-seeing relation from the country comes scrambling about London. You needn't tell me, I know all about it. I never yet acquired knowledge enough on any subject to feel myself quite sure of being in the right, but I have gone sufficiently deep into many to be certain that other people are in the wrong. On this one subject, in particular, they know nothing. When I speak of *you*, I mean the world; you can't be offended if you have your fellow-creatures on your side, and I freely make you a present of them."

"But," I urged, "your argument carries you further than you intended, and lands you in a palpable error; for it supposes a general want of that sense of the beautiful, and that strong perception of some particular features of it, which so far from being a rarity in society, is a general characteristic. You will hardly deny that very ordinary persons, whatever they may think of their own faces, are not blind to the good looks of others; that a common impression is produced on a common crowd by the sight of a handsome woman; that the stupidest starers find something to gaze upon when the

moonlight silvers a pile of ancient buildings; and that the vulgar when they glance round a rich summer landscape, or behold a magnificent sea-view, have a touch of the universal joy and refinement produced by the universal inspirer, the Presence of Beauty."

"Yes, and if art were only what you seem to consider it, I should be silent; but their appreciation of handsome faces and moonlit buildings, is all they carry with them into picture-galleries. Hence their understanding ends where the imaginative in art begins, and their feelings are alone interested by what is literal and exact. The most correct and best made-out pieces charm them most. The most vulgar and rigid copy is to their eyes most like the original. They see the likeness of the handsome face, and a miniature view of the woody mountain: they comprehend them, and are satisfied. Their little souls expand to receive the commonplace. My fine sketches there would be rare hieroglyphics to the good shilling-paying people."

"And yet," I responded, "the best artists are always the most admired. Some inferior ones may, from adventitious circumstances, obtain patronage in high places, but they do not command, even with this advantage, the popular voice. Whose names are most familiar to the public mouth? The names which the highest talent has made memorable. Around what pictures in an exhibition are the largest and most admiring crowds collected? The pictures which high talent has made glorious."

"Fashion," returned Sharpson, "holds sway more or less in every thing, and crowds beget crowds. Besides, there are some kinds of power which, employed on certain subjects, will always interest even the dull herd. But rarely indeed, save under the influence of fashion and flock-following, do the dull herd seek pasturage on

the eminences of art. They prefer to leave the 'fair mountain' to 'batten on this moor,' where their low spirits are quite at home. Of course they do not go away without getting a glimpse of the pictures, the frames at all events, to which great names are attached; because they are aware that in the cant of the 'circle' in which they move, be it wide or narrow, they are required to take part; and they are alive to the necessity of falling into ecstasies, whether the present performances of those leading artists be exquisite or so-so. But it is the commonplace that in reality enchants them; the portrait of a lady, the kitten with the ball of cotton, the intolerable hamper of game, the detestable bunch of flowers, and the execrable basket of fruit."

"That such execrables are yearly exhibited in sundry places is admitted, but you are not thence to assume that they are admired—"

"I prove it," interposed Sharpson, "when I prove that they are painted. Artists, good and bad, work for the market. The great painter, indeed, *may* find a liberal purchaser for his work, but the profound Incapable is almost *sure* of a customer. Why, what becomes of the hundreds of odious outrages annually sent forth! Do you think they are burned? *They are bought.* Somewhere shines the sun upon their horrible varnish, and some poor wretches' eyes have daily to endure the sight of them."

"Nay, if they are bought," cried I, "they cease to be atrocities. They instantly acquire a moral glow that gives a mellowing tone to their flaring hues; they are wrapt in a poetry of sentiment that redeems them from contempt. The act of purchase seals their pretensions as valuable works of art, and the 'thing of beauty is a joy for ever,' an heirloom on the walls of its owner."

"You substantiate the charge with which I started!"

exclaimed Sharpson, upsetting his glass. "I said you judged of a picture by the wall on which it hung."

"The *owner* of it often does; but I have no pictures, and am a disinterested witness. It is the owner of the picture who is wall-eyed. Possession is nine points of criticism. The painting whose merit never struck him while seen by the light from a friend's window, becomes a work of tremendous power in the light shed upon it through his own. The bad specimen of an indifferent master, being the property of a neighbour, is transformed into an excellent specimen of a consummate genius, being hung in his own study. What was a poor copy while it was anybody's property, is an undeniable original when his."

"What 's that you say?" muttered Sharpson.

"Did you ever see—or rather did you ever hear of the man, who, boasting of pictures at all, failed to boast of them as perfections? Is not everybody's little collection quite unique? Is it not everywhere understood that the large painting in the dining-room, with a particular hue over the flesh of the figures, is a Guido! Who doubts that the dark canvas dashed with light exhibits the hand of Rembrandt? If anybody, certainly it is not the possessor of such prizes. He is as thoroughly assured of the genuineness of that Salvator before his eyes, as he would have been doubtful of it a year ago, before he ever dreamed of its becoming his. He has not a bad picture, and scarcely an indifferent one, in his house. His sole doubt is, whether his favourites are the best things ever painted by the artists to whom he attributes them, or merely equal to the best. He is always sure that he prefers his own to the Duke of Devonshire's specimen. He has three times refused two hundred guineas at least for any one of them you may chance to suspect. You may doubt and

dislike anything that is his, rather than his pictures. Tell him that he has been ill-used by his wine-merchant; pick his costliest books to pieces as the genuine waste-paper editions; and you may be forgiven, while you forbear to hazard a suspicion that Velasquez never painted that man in red, or that Vandyck is as innocent of the lady in blue as the lady's child that is unborn."

"Dry work," said Sharpson, "some claret."

"And you yourself," I continued, returning from generals to particulars, with which the conversation had commenced, "were you quite sure, when you attributed my appreciation of these sketches to the accident of finding them accredited and in capital company, that you were free from the usual bias in their favour created by the consciousness of their being your own? I believe that this idea of property enters insensibly but very largely into many of our tastes and opinions. Whatever is ours we esteem in a degree as part of us; self puts a golden gloss upon it. It is a modification of the intenser feeling with which we regard our children; we cannot for our lives see their snub noses and vicious tempers. They have sweet voices, clean faces, delightful dispositions, and there is no end to their prodigious cleverness; because they belong to us. They are ducks, loves, and angels; for they are ours. What are the very same children, the identical little nuisances, when they belong to the people over the way—"

"I beg—I beg pardon," interrupted Sharpson, "but really I must say—a—Mrs. Sharpson, as you are aware, has hitherto had no children; I mean, we have no family at present; but still these abusive epithets to a father's, that is, to a husband's ears; and besides you are wrong. If I had not fallen desperately in love with those two sketches, while they were the property of a stranger,

they never would have been mine at all. Shall I tell you how I got them? What do you say? Claret and a short story, or coffee and—"

"No, no; if there's to be a story, indeed, we had better not inflict it upon the ladies. So go on, I have filled already."

He began:

"In a common Covent-garden sale-room, heaped with a variety of goods, I first spied my treasures, in company with a great French flaring picture, all crimson and purple. These three formed 'Lot 70.' Turning this pair of precious faces to the wall, and placing the gaudy foreigner in front, that their native lustre might not attract notice, I marked the number in my catalogue. The sale was to take place in six days. The lot might be inspected in the interim by hundreds, but not one in a thousand among that troop of picture-buyers and teaboard critics would recognise those rude sketches as being worth five shillings. The French flare, however, had its fascinations, and it was but too probable that the lot would fetch money. Much or little, I looked upon that lot as mine; and duly attended at the appointed hour of sale, resolved to stand a contest if need be, even at the cost of being supposed guilty of coveting such an abomination as the purple and crimson thing. Alas! the door was closed, and the sale was over! It had taken place a day earlier in consequence of Her Majesty's coronation-day being changed."

"It was changed, I remember; George the Fourth, you know, died—"

"I can't help that," said Sharpson, impatiently; "but I know the change occasioned me bitter mortification, and many weeks of anxious labour and inquiry. Those twin-beauties had been carried off at one fell swoop, by some vulgar hand that clutched only at their

bright-coloured companion. The possessor never coveted those simple deities in an undress, he was in love only with Sukey Tawdry. He had paid something for what was worthless, but he had obtained what was invaluable for nothing. Yes, literally, that pair of Exquisites, whose divine beauty you conceive to be intelligible 'to the meanest capacity,' had been in scores of hands, taken up and set down again, held in a particular light to promote the discovery of their meaning, and turned over and over in the search for some name that might illumine their obscurity: yet they had only been knocked down at last as foils to the lustre of the foreigner.

"Had a man of taste, discovering the hidden jewels, borne them off for their own sakes, I should have felt more reconciled to my mischance; had I been defeated in a contest for *them*, I had been content; but they had fallen to one who gained nothing by my loss. I was a victim, not to superior sagacity, but to false principles of taste, and vulgar ignorance of the beautiful.

"All I could learn about the lot was, that it fetched nothing, and was knocked down to nobody; to a man named ——; perhaps a dealer, perhaps not; he had paid, and departed with his prize. In every direction did I go to work, to discover a man named ——. From the 'Directory' to the 'Court-guide,' from the 'Court-guide' to the lists of the learned societies, of Parliament and of the Army and Navy, I searched, and found the name often, but no clue to the picture-buyer. I wrote many letters, and paid divers visits. I made the grand tour of town, dipping into the frame-makers' shops, ransacking the brokers, and routing up every neglected receptacle for odds-and-ends of *vertu*. But in the course of this adventurous and wearying search, not one word of inquiry did I hazard concerning the real objects of my desire. People, though profoundly ignorant of art,

are learned in human whims, and, if successful in finding them for me, would have made me pay for my apparent craziness. I asked only for the French flarer, which I did not mean to buy. Its colour, once descried, would be a torch to light me to my nameless treasures.

"At last, upon my putting the question, which I began now to do mechanically to every one I met, 'Do you know a man named ——, a sort of picture-dealer?' I one day felt myself lifted into the air with joy at hearing the unhoped-for answer,

"'Yes, I think I do; if you go into Barbican—' and I was directed to the street.

"And therein, indeed, was the house I sought. There, amidst a miscellaneous assemblage of valuables, comprising second-hand harness, new and old implements of trade, and remnants of faded furniture, a few pictures were visible through the smoke and dust. In another minute I had paused before the door, and could scarcely suppress in the open street a cry of delight. Brightest and loveliest amongst them, like Lucifer, star of the morning, shone in the place of honour at the doorway—on the line, as they say in the Academy—the glorious French *chef d'œuvre* in crimson and purple. I have been in Holland, Belgium, France, and Italy, but I think I never saw a picture with half so much pleasure. I could have found it in my heart to buy it; to give away to an acquaintance who had injured me. But revenge is not a Christian virtue, and I buttoned up my pocket.

"After a few turns, to and fro, to allay my rapture, I again paused at the door. The man named ——, my long-sought, late-found, all-unconscious, but most cruel enemy, at once made his appearance. He marked my glistening eye as I pretended to inspect the French

phenomenon, and felt sure that he had got a customer. I looked at him for an instant with the inward reflection, 'So *you* are the man named ——! Merciful gods, how I have talked and dreamed about you!'

"'A fine picture that, sir; chaste colouring; by an eminent French artist, and quite new. The price? It's only fifteen guineas!'

"'It is certainly a brilliant work of its kind,' I remarked, walking into the shop, and glancing carelessly round; 'I fancied it might form a companion to a French picture of mine; if so, but I shall see, give me the dimensions of it, will you? Fifteen guineas! umph! I think it would fit a vacant frame I happen to have; ah! yes, pray let me have the exact measure.'

"And at this point of the proceeding, my eyes, which during the measurement of the four feet of purple by three of crimson, had been anxiously directed, high and low, into every corner of the shop, detected near the end the two springs in the desert; my pair of painted poems, my Paradise Lost and Regained! My heart leaped up, as though I had beheld

A rainbow in the sky!

Nay, two rainbows! But caution was still necessary, for eagerness might defeat my purpose.

The man named ——, had he seen how the sketches affected me, would have been cunning enough to ask a huge price, and I was pre-determined to complete my triumph by securing them for a trifle.

"'Ah! so these are the exact dimensions, three-feet-four; yes, very well. It is a striking picture, certainly. Why, you have several good paintings here, several; excellent indeed; pleasing foreground that, and sky quite airy. This! by Sir *Joshua* Lawrence! is it really? very clever, and a capital frame! Ah, so you paint a little yourself, I perceive—these two things here.'

"'What things, sir? Oh, them; ah! no, sir, I didn't do 'em; little too busy to amuse myself that way.'

"'Better employed, eh? But one of your little boys, perhaps, has been trying his hand, has a sort of turn for—'

"'No, sir, no; I don't know what they are, not I; I met with 'em somewhere; I've heard say they don't look amiss in some lights—at this distance now?'

"'Ah! I perceive; might easily be improved though, you think. Well, now I see you didn't paint them, or you wouldn't laugh at them so. But this French picture here, I have a fit companion for it: fifteen pounds you said; guineas, was it? I always pay pounds. And this is the exact measure, umph? As for these queer beginnings, I suppose they are not for sale at all? I think I could colour them up into something rather different.'

"'Why, sir, if you take the handsome French painting, I shall throw you these things in for nothing.'

"'No, no, not for nothing. Well then, come, suppose I agree to your price, guineas instead of pounds, allowing the odd shillings for these little extras! And, by the bye, I may as well move them out of your way at once, and take them in the cab with me. Can you give me change for a sovereign?'

* * * *

"The cab seemed to fly away with me; me and my two companions."

* * * *

"Elysian beauty, melancholy grace!"

I exclaimed, "these are the names of the two. Lovely and spiritual children of exalted Art, partakers of the spirit's privilege, Invisibility, being before the world's eyes, yet all unnoticed and unseen! But I must be pardoned, notwithstanding this true story, for maintaining that the present remarkable and adventurous age is not so grossly ignorant—"

"On all points; assuredly not," returned Sharpson. "The educated classes generally, are excellent judges of beef, respectable judges of books, tolerable judges of music, no contemptible judges of taxes, and very bad judges of each other; but the thing they know least about is Art. People who are good critics on other great subjects, are mere canters upon this; that's my creed. And now, what shall it be, once more—coffee or claret?"

THE PICTURE-HUNTER.

Few people, except the enjoyers of princely incomes, can boast of possessing such pictures as my old acquaintance, Ferret. How did he get them? He did not inherit them, as he inherited that bright, sharp, searching eye of his; he never had a legacy left to him; he never had a fortune to spend on superfluities; and he never committed a burglary in his life. How did he get them, is not the question; but where did he pick them up?

There are people who can hardly set foot out of doors in a large city without "picking up" a picture. Ferret is one of this fortunate set of prize-finders. Pictures are to him the sole realities of life. The only tangible things he knows of are panel and canvas, except gilt frames. To his eye the whole world presents but two colours, oil colour and water colour. The earth, as he walks upon it, seems to have a coat of varnish over it; and society, from the point whence he surveys it, is only a great work of art: a large, bold composition, in which, however, the lights are too much concentrated, and the shadows too abrupt and deep. The finest compliment

he can pay to nature is to think she looks gloriously artificial; and when he sees the fiery flush of a sunset, he feels that it almost comes up to Turner. He nothing cares about the common salt sea and mere salt sea wonders; he is for poetry's

> "———— painted ship
> Upon a painted ocean;"

floating on real water, as he says exultingly, like Stanfield's! He never paused to look on a noble scene, from hill, valley, or river, without considering how it would "come," when properly reduced by the artist. No, never did he linger over a rich and varied landscape, except to determine in his mind how it would look framed, in an exhibition; perhaps, what it would sell for at an auction, or how it would exchange for a Benjamin West that he didn't want.

When he went to Niagara, and first stood within view of the great fall, he said, musingly, "Ah! I should like to have *that* in my back drawing-room!" Were he the spectator of a scene in Newgate, the view would excite a similar feeling; "it would hang extremely well opposite the window," between the two Websters. When he takes a country stroll, he tells you that he went down the lane, passed the bit of Gainsborough, till he came to a Hofland, between the trees; and were he to direct a stranger to the next town, he would desire him to leave the Nasmyth on his left hand, turn off by the Collins at the cottage, and keep on till he saw a David Roberts before him.

He dates every event pictorially, having no idea of figures save those whereof lay figures are the "rude forefathers." He declares that he has made his little study a complete bit of Cattermole; he was married, he forgets the year, that very season in which the fine

Etty was exhibited at Somerset House; and he knows the age of his little girl, whom he says looks like a Chalon, from her being born when Maclise's "Rock" picture was brought out. Of his wife he observes, that you would not have known her, five years ago, from a Pickersgill; but somehow, he does not know how it is, she has of late acquired quite a Rubensy look, with considerable breadth of effect. When he hears her voice, as he does sometimes, rising above its ordinary pitch, he is wont to say, with a fair share of jocoseness, that there is a good tone about her still.

Lies are related of everybody. They do say, that dining where there was a pig upon table, he sent up his plate "for another bit of the Morland," which he pronounced to be an undoubted original. When the dessert and its decorations made their appearance, he remarked that he had not seen nicer specimens of Lance for several seasons.

Allowing for a little excess in colouring, there is truth enough here to show that Ferret thinks, reads, speaks, and dreams of nothing but pictures. But thinking, &c., of a thing does not always involve the possession of it. Patrons of art cannot dream *chefs d'œuvre* upon their walls, and talk old masters into their galleries. Unless they steal, or buy them, they must infallibly "pick them up." This is what my friend Ferret does; this is what he came into the world to do, and he has done nothing else. In his collection, he sees the fruit of his life's toils; in every separate picture he reads the record of some triumph of superior knowledge, profound ingenuity, and untiring labour.

But we must show the how and the where. Some of his gems he has brought from the dark, unfathomed caves of coalsheds; some of his immortal flowers he has plucked in the desert air of auction-rooms, which, but

for him, had been buyerless. Some he has discovered on worm-eaten wainscots; others he has detected beneath the dust of old-rubbish rooms; and many he has secured in the fair way of barter, by giving gaudy bad pictures for dingy good ones. Ferret is mightily fond of offering new lamps for old. He has always by him a little stock of showy skies and flashy foregrounds, ready to exchange for dark brown bits of canvass, which he afterwards contrives to rub into brightness and value.

What a life has he led, and what contradictions compose his destiny! Seeking for beauty inexpressible, he has passed years amidst the squalid and reeking dens of towns and cities. For pearl, he has gone to swine. With an eye beholding, in the intensity of its inquiry, nothing less bright than the hues of Rubens, he has pried unweariedly into the innermost recesses of old brokers' shops; with a sense appreciating the seraphic forms of Guido, he has tumbled over, unloathingly, the treasures of a temple sacred to marine stores. He has, indeed, sought sunshine in the shady places.

No auction that happens to have a picture in it ever escapes his notice. He knows the contents of every public gallery, nay, every private collection in the kingdom. He is a living catalogue of the "gems" in every dealer's hands. Mention a picture-cleaner, and he will particularise the fine specimens at that moment in his keeping. He can tell you who had the Giorgione that was for sale in Tottenham-court Road, and who bought the doubtful Titian in the Minories. He is many picture-hunters in one—an Art-Union!

For weeks together, perhaps, has he gone his daily rounds; sometimes eastward of the city, now westward, and anon in the widely-spreading suberbs; looking out for adventures, and beating up for prizes; but picking out of the chaff and ruin no treasure obscure; no scrap

of Morland, no bit of Bonnington, nor even an endurable copy of Rembrandt or Sir Joshua! But then, has he not secured something as good?

As good? Ay, some new lamp to exchange for an old one! some pleasing abomination at a low price; some poor copy, carefully finished, of a sketch by a great master; or some bad original by a painter that happens just at the moment to be in fashion! Either of these, duly set off with a shining surface and a frame re-burnished, would hardly fail, in the market of ignorance (and people in general know less about pictures than anything else, except themselves), to secure to him the transfer of a small prize, a modest, inattractive, and by no means brilliant performance, yet really worthy to be called a work of art. This, for its subject's sake, perhaps, or because there is nothing startling about it, wins its way in a better market than the other; and, by the aid of a showy companion, flung gratuitously in to set off its simple merits to advantage, is bartered for a real prize, a handsome second-rate; which, in turn, accompanied by two or three agreeable illusions in blue and yellow, with frames of a new pattern, is made over to some infallible connoisseur, in exchange for the grand object, the unquestionable treasure, the fine picture by the fine master.

Months, perhaps years, have been devoted to the full working out of this manœuvre; but there, nevertheless, is the master at last.

Suppose, however, that the prize turns up in the regular course of the wheel! that in the old iron shop, in the loft or cellar heaped with lumber, a genuine picture, incrusted like an old coin, and of equally solid pretensions to be judged according to a standard of value, now and then flashes out upon the practised and all-penetrating eye! With what an anxious, yet ex-

ulting scrutiny, is it visited! When was hieroglyphic deciphered, when was black-letter scanned, with half the devotion, the hope, the fear, the enthusiasm, which stir the throbbing pulses of the picture-hunter, as he seeks, "behind the scenes," the author of the enchantment! examining the bare back of the picture, and tracing in every mark discoverable on the canvas a confirmation of, or contradiction to, his theory; finding in a crazy stretcher a token, and in the carved framework a sign!

Then with what a triumph is the obscure and dirty kitcat carried off! How is the venerable and sensitive canvas handled reverentially, as never was bank-paper with "£1000" in the corner! how carefully is it lined, stretched, and strengthened! with what tenderness and delicacy are the layers of varnish removed, and the colours brought out into admiring day. Above all, perhaps, with what an ecstacy of aspiration, a kindling of the whole soul, does the eye search among the brightening lines which chequer the foliage in the foreground, for an initial or a date! If but one letter steals slowly into sight at last, it is sure—this is an invariable rule—to be the initial of some great painter; and it happens not less curiously, that, whoever the painter may be, the picture then and there a subject of such fond speculation is certain to be not only a manifest production of his school, but an unquestionable specimen of his individual style. C. stands for Cuyp all the world over; and if the date should show that he was only three years of age at the time, the picture is the more remarkable for being so early a production of his easel. Cuyp had produced precious things before, but here is a prodigy.

Let it not be here imagined, however, that my friend Ferret is a self-deceiver; like Garrick, a dupe to his

art; the possessor of wooden nutmegs, instead of the original spices. Years ago, indeed, he fell regularly into this error. Then every forged initial on a daub purposely damaged, and ingeniously made ancient, was the handwriting of a master. He thought it little to go out with four-and-sixpence in his pocket, and bring home a Claude. The acquisition of eleven undoubted Canalettis in a week was slow work, and with a sigh on Saturday, over his miserable progress, he said, "This wont do!" Monday found him mending; and a sketch of Raphael's, a group by one or both of the Poussins, and two or three originals of the modern school (real Wilsons, most likely), all publicly purchased for five-and twenty shillings, promised better success.

But as soon as his walls were covered, the delusion was at an end; and he sold more wisely than he bought, turning his romances to realities, or, in other words, exchanging the showy for the substantial. It was by dint of extraordinary assiduity, unceasing research, the toil of years, the direction of every faculty of the mind to one darling object, that Ferret became the phenomenon we now behold him,—a picture-hunter who never cheats, and is never to be cheated; who spends nothing, yet buys much; who picks up a ragged Humphrey Clinker, and finds him a smart young gentleman, in wig and ruffles. It is true that he will even now insist upon a case of legitimacy, when facts will not always bear him out. Slow to decide, he is proof against doubt when the decision has once been given. He will insist upon the Correggiosity of his Correggios, all of them. One or two of his foreigners have rather an English look; his Murillo was certainly painted in Dublin. But to tell him that his Annibal Carracci is not an Annibal Carracci; you might as well tell me that Pope was no poet. Ferret's catalogue is rich in great names; but if

the sums paid for his various pictures were placed opposite to them in the list, it would be still more remarkable for small figures. It would be ludicrous, if it were not so *very* absurd, to hear him tell the truth about his prices and purchases. His boast is, that he has not, for ten years, expended five pounds upon a painting. His maxim being, that all fine pictures sell either for very large or for very small sums, he has watched the market at the latter turn; and then, profiting by his dexterous system of exchanges in other instances, he is enabled fairly to estimate his expenditure upon every separate gem.

"For that bit of Parmegiano I gave three shillings; the Guido cost me, however, fifteen; but then I luckily secured that fine Gaspar for ninepence. There's a Michael! it's disputed, I know; but it ought not to be, for it cost me, altogether, four pounds twelve, lining and all. Why, that Salvator took upwards of three pounds out of my pocket! Ah! I was extravagant then! But some of these I got cheaper. I exchanged some supposed Rembrandts, and a sham Watteau, for this fine Both. That's good, the Wouvermans; that and the Ruysdael I got for nothing: that is, I gave a big West for them. Here: you wouldn't think, now, that this Hobbima cost me but eleven and sixpence, with discount for ready money! But come this way: there's a true Correggio! for which I swapped, receiving fifteen pounds to buy a frame, two villanous things, one called 'Game,' and the other 'Fruit,' which had been thrown into a lot I bought at an auction!"

My friend Ferret thus walks and talks amidst his treasures; while of mankind he knows nothing whatever, save of the few who buy and sell pictures. To him, the ideal is actual; the forms of things are the substances. If the soul, as some wise philosophers

have suspected, ever returns to the earth it has once quitted, Ferret's will assuredly be found somewhere, looking complacently out of a gold frame, sixteen inches by eleven.

THREE LESSONS DRAWN FROM LIFE.

But still your finger on your lip, I pray.—HAMLET.

INTRODUCTORY—MUM!

WHERESOEVER that admonitory and interjectional monosyllable "Mum!" is in most familiar and frequent use, a kind of freemasonry prevails. Depend upon it, he from whose lips it issues, and he to whose ears it is addressed, very well understand each other. A volume, large as the catalogue of last year's lies, could not possibly say more than these three letters say; and all the signs, gestures, and motions that ever rendered pantomime intelligible, are utterly pointless and inexpressive, compared with the quiet knowing glance, and the simple pressure of the finger on the lip, by which that low, noiseless, but wonderfully eloquent sound should always be accompanied.

"Mum" is an injunction to secresy and silence, generally implying something of cunning, knavery, mischief, in the work to be concealed. It was never yet uttered in connexion with any grand crime. It is impossible to conceive, that in any case of strong and terrible necessity for caution and secresy—any momentous occasion of treason or assassination, for example—it ever rose to the white lips of conspirators mutually apprehensive of betrayal through each other's rashness or treachery.

We cannot, for an instant, imagine the ghastly murderer, reeking with the warm blood of innocence, looking into the horrid eyes of his fellow-monster, and breaking the dreadful silence with such a whisper. Nor are villains of a few grades above these much more likely to enjoin silence in such a fashion. The instinct of secresy is common to them all: the lesson conveyed in "mum," they had learned by heart before they began. They do not feel any necessity for telling a companion in guilt to keep his own council. After a flat burglary, it would seem at best superfluous for the rogues to assemble, with the view of warning each other to keep a still tongue in the head. The only thief who could not do so was a young one, who, full of conceit because he had robbed in company with a celebrated highwayman, went about boasting everywhere of the fact.

It is not amongst such personages, then, that the term would ever be uttered. Its meaning would be understood perhaps, continually, but not expressed. And yet, all ye subtle spirits who preside over mortal villany; ye imps of darkness who cloak from prying eyes the roguish doings of men; ye cunning ministers of knowledge who delight in instructing apt humanity in the great art of swindling on the safe side of the law; bear witness, what a world of honourable fraud and treachery, of respectable lying, cheating, and slandering, of legal stabbing in the dark, the little monosyllable covers!

What is there of knavery in friendship, of infidelity in love; what of social plotting, malice, or intrigue, that is not sealed up in the sound, and made safe and snug by the fingers pressed upon the mouth!

"Mum" is a real name, not a doubt of it, of a vast number of highly respectable persons, who, in court-guides and trade-directories, figure unconsciously under

all kinds of aliases. Ask this gentleman what was the name of his grandfather—mum! Ask that merchant how he was called when he sold mutton-pies in Threadneedle-street—mum! Ask the most exemplary and affectionate of wives, if she remembers the name of that lively young gentleman who so very often, before she was married—mum! Or ask the best of husbands what on earth it is that carries him with such marvellous frequency and regularity to Number 7, in so quiet and respectable a street as—mum! We have known, with more or less of personal ground for regret, many members of the Mum family.

I.

Jonas Fairbrow was for fifty years a leading man in the first city in the world. All his sayings, wherever they were heard, were considered to be as good as his doings, and these were equal to the best. Not a breath of dishonour ever fell momentarily upon his bright name; not the slightest trace of crookedness was ever discoverable in his open, honest, straightforward mode of business.

Everybody, however professionally suspicious, and however little skilled in other kinds of character, was firmly persuaded that he thoroughly knew Jonas Fairbrow. Not to see through *him*, indeed, would have been esteemed a sort of blindness; a mental dulness, equal to an incapacity of seeing a reflection in a mirror, or pebbles at the bottom of a lucid stream.

So clear seemed his entire character, presented to the searching eye at all points of it, that there was, as far as appearances went, nothing whatever in it to hide, and concealment seemed impossible. No eye, carefully examining a piece of amber, but must see whether grubs and worms were enclosed in it or not; and with

as much apparent certainty would any wriggling, grubbing qualities have been detected in the character of Fairbrow, if they had been there.

The lustre that shone in him was the lustre of justice, of probity, of honour; not of generosity, of chivalrous munificence. He did not profess to be influenced by any of those flashy qualities that rather dazzle and blind us, than lighten our way, as a good example should do. True, he would now and then contribute to a fund for some benevolent purpose, when he saw in the public advertisement that it was supported by persons whom he approved; and he allowed his name to be inscribed (gold letters on a purple ground) in a conspicuous part of the parish church, as a beneficent patron of the charity-school. Yet although it might be thus said of him, that he loved his neighbour as himself, it was with the qualification suggested by the reflection, that in point of fact he had many neighbours, and that to act too handsomely by one of them to-day, would be to incur the shame of acting too shabbily by another to-morrow. He was, for the most part, content to be just, liberal when he could, never less than independent, but always just.

Other men, when they were settling a large account, or paying cash down, never thought of handing in the odd twopence-halfpenny: but Jonas Fairbrow was as particular on the penny-point as the pound one; nay, if but one farthing was due from him, upon an account of thousands, that humble coin he would insist upon rendering unto Cæsar, as a thing that, being rightly his, could not be rightly kept from him. Other men, moreover, would often receive or pay trifling sums without much anxiety about twopenny stamps; Jonas Fairbrow would as soon have committed the oversight of paying when he should receive, merging his own

identity as a creditor in that of a debtor, as have lost sight of the state's interest in the transaction.

So scrupulous, so conscientious even to a fault was he, in all business dealings, large and small. His repute, as we have intimated, was in proportion. Diogenes, if he had lived in our day, would assuredly have blown out his candle, and invited himself to take a seat after his long walk, the instant he had found out Jonas. Found out Jonas! Alack, this is an unlucky phrase, and prematurely brings on the catastrophe.

Jonas Fairbrow was, in truth, a wonderful scoundrel.

What the world said of him was very true, that he would not cheat you of a farthing; but this was not in reality because he was too honest, but because he was too knowing to play at hazard for such coin. He considered integrity to be too valuable a commodity, weighed according to the prejudices of the world, to be parted with for small sums. His doctrine was, that honesty was always the best policy, when the amount to be otherwise obtained was not worth having.

Instead of a farthing, you should have tried him with a thousand pounds: which means that you should *not;* for Jonas, who had but the week before remembered, on meeting you after a long absence, that he had been unavoidably indebted to you, during all that time, in the sum of one shilling and ninepence, the balance of an old account, would assuredly repay himself for this conscientious effort of the memory, by overreaching you in the grand matter.

Faithful in trifles, he secured a confidence on which he built successfully when a fortune had to pass through his fingers. Daringly rob you of the least particle of it, he certainly would not; but quietly and safely appropriate it to his own uses, in some way, he certainly would. Put yourself in his power inadvertently, by the

omission of some necessary form, by an unconsidering reliance upon his arrangements, by a carelessness of disposition, or a confidence in his good name; and Jonas Fairbrow was just the man to take every advantage of the circumstance, that cunning could suggest or law would allow. To the general eye,

"Earth had not anything to show more fair"

than the conscience of the respected trader; or more leprous when it was looked upon from within. The difference all resolved itself into "mum."

The magic word was ever his password to success; his secret key to enormous wealth. All his open and public transactions prospered, for he had the benefit of unbounded faith reposed in his sagacity and trustworthiness; but his more private movements brought him to the mine of Plutus by much shorter cuts, and there were myriads of them ever winning him into their secret depths.

In the face of day, his reputation for plain-dealing would not permit him to take more than a fair rate of interest; but under cover of "mum," three hundred per cent. would by no means come amiss. Publicly, no fortunate investment could be found, for the money you deposited in his hands; but mum!—and then what excellent securities offered, what channels of profit opened up, what windfalls every breeze brought!

Most people could tell how Jonas Fairbrow advanced the round sum of money required to set up the young Brothers as traders direct to Golconda; but (on account of "mum") few understood how, when his claim upon the house thus established had passed in the course of business into other hands, the flourishing concern suddenly changed hands too, becoming the sole property of somebody unknown before, while the profits mysteriously found their way into the coffers of Jonas.

Everybody, in like manner, could appreciate the motive with which the good man got from his embarrassed friend a list of his business debts, and then nobly paid all the creditors in full; and everybody too could talk of such an act as this; but "mum" was the word when the good man proceeded with prodigious success to take possession, and carry on the business by proxy, until his friend, now without a sixpence to be sure, but thanks to the bounty of Jonas entirely free from debt, should happily discover some means of repurchasing it, that is, of paying off his *one* creditor, by whom the hundred had been replaced.

Without the impunity, the independence of action, ensured by an observance of the real meaning of "mum," such things as these could not conveniently be effected. Some natures would not scruple indeed, but, generally speaking, there would be less comfort in taking open advantage of a friend's ruin.

The affairs of a corporation, the management of large contracts, of public trusts, of private guardianships; above all, cases, whether private or public, in which the principle of responsibility is not directly kept in view, would often wear a materially different aspect when suddenly subjected to investigation, if that profoundly moral maxim which is concentrated, centralized, it might almost be said, in the heart of the language, in the word "mum," had not been a special favourite with all parties concerned.

The honoured, the respectable, the conscientious Jonas was a profound rascal, who never violated a single law, good or bad, in his life; an "incarnation" of treachery, who never broke any engagement he ever made; an impostor and a cheat, whose dealings the world decided to be integrity itself.

In the course of his fifty years of prosperity and power, he had filled half as many prisons with the vic-

tims of his policy; which the public voice, nevertheless, still pronounced to be "the best." Nay, it bestowed upon him fresh honours, while he gathered together fresh riches; as though he had secured to himself every virtue belonging to the poor wretch whom he had driven into crime, with the same ease that he had acquired all the property of the poor wretch whom he had driven into beggary.

The public only saw his hand ever upon his heart; they could not always see that most suspicious index to character, the forefinger on the lip; laid, if the seeming contradiction may be allowed, speakingly on the lip. They heard him discourse, as they fondly thought, out of the fulness of his heart; their ears caught not that muttered word of mystery, in whose low, sly significance half his biography is written.

They talked of giving him a public funeral; but so numerous are his descendants, many not unworthy of him, in the first city of the world, that the precedent was considered to be an awkward one. It is well, no doubt, for some reasons, to remember such men; but better, for other and deeper ones, to blot them from the memory. If monuments they must have, because they have left money to pay for them, the inscription should be an impressive one: the epitaph should be

MUM.

II.

Mrs. Aspenall, when first we knew her, was in the bloom of youth; in the spring of that early wifehood, which, where the wedded lover has not yet had time to take to drinking, nor his beloved the perversity to take to the vapours, is perhaps preferable to any system of

widowhood hitherto devised for the relief and accommodation of the sex. She was something of a flirt, but much more of a romp, giddy with her own sleepless and untirable sense of enjoyment, and bent on making all whom she really liked as giddy as herself.

The characteristic by which she was everywhere best known, which displayed itself in her large laughing eyes to all who looked into them, which equally told its story to all ears in the quick full tones of a voice charmingly sweet and frank, was her open-heartedness. Most certain it was, at the same time, that she was not at all particular in what she said to anybody, and for a whole quarter of an hour she would rattle away over the ups and downs of a story, without being at the moment in the least degree aware that she was absolutely inventing the tale as she went on, and that there was not one single word of truth in the full and particular statement, of which she was quite ready on the spot to vouch the accuracy.

But it is certain that by this she intended not the slightest deception, and merely yielded to a rather unsafe habit of uttering at once, and without reflection, whatsoever might chance to start up in her ardent, childish, unsuspicious mind. She said all she thought at the time, and when more thoughts rushed into her head, she uttered them also; and if she should happen to think once more, she spoke as promptly on the same principle; or, if not, she talked without thinking.

What she gave utterance to at five o'clock might not agree exactly with what she said at six; but it was true to her feelings when first spoken, and that was enough for her. She always declared that she never could be responsible for any after ideas springing up in her brain to contradict her original notions; and thus it is easy enough to see what a tissue of lively, giddy, whim-

sical mistakes and anomalies, were Mrs. Aspenall's opinions and conversations.

Still it is as easy to see that whatever confusion might thus be produced, her mind was always clear in the midst of it all, and that there was no reserve about the giddy enchantress. So innocent and good-natured was she, that her own personal friends actually spoke well of her. Hers was an extreme case, it must be owned. Not one even of her intimate lady gossips gave her an ill word above once a week.

Yet do not fancy that because her own sex liked her, Mrs. Aspenall was not handsome, for she was, deucedly handsome. And do not suppose because the women only gave her an ill word or so once a week, that she was a dowdy, or could not boast a constant and brilliant succession of new dresses, ornaments, and *bijouterie*, for she could; to an extent that eclipsed half May Fair in which she lived, and set Bloomsbury dying of a disease compounded of amazement and envy.

Indeed, next to her characteristic of open-mindedness, dress was the thing that she would be best known by; if this can truly be said in the case of one who was rarely, if ever, seen twice in the same attire. The natural feminine liking for change amounted in Mrs. Aspenall to a passion, and this passion, like many other violent and unconquerable ones, sought to keep itself constantly stimulated by means of obstacles and difficulties; for it would feed on none but rare foreign food.

As many incomparable pairs of gloves and stockings, as much matchless lace and silk, as costly a crowd of jewelled ornaments of every device, except that of last year, she was ready to receive from all corners of the earth, monthly, as would have ensured to the famous Messrs. Anybody, of St. James's, a really dazzling display for a whole season; and so fast did the fashions

flash and fade before the eyes of her friends, each becoming her better than the last, that there was no time for envy to take root, and still less for the more tedious speculations of wonder natural in other cases of a less enormous prodigality; such as, where all the money came from, whether they were all paid for, what gold-mine her silly husband expected to find, or who the tradesmen were, that, with such criminal insanity, gave her unlimited credit.

We repeat, that for these, and perhaps many more less good-natured surmises still, applicable and popular among affectionate friends in ordinary cases, there was in this especial one barely time; so rapidly were changes effected, and with such new fascinations did each successive fashion invest the irresistible Mrs. Aspenall.

Her popularity with her sex (such a delightful contradiction was she!) actually increased, as she contrived to look lovelier; and when she figured once more in new patterns, and colours of the most tasteful yet luxuriant kind, her female friends absolutely admired without envy, and praised without a sneer. And she deserved this rare fortune; for of any littleness, any grudging, any depreciation of the pretensions of others, she was manifestly incapable. It was but to look into her face to see that she was the soul of honour.

Never, as that face distinctly proclaimed, could the high spirit within, though volatile and giddy, stoop to procure the lavish adornments of external beauty, by any means below the purest. Never could that good-natured heart be prompted by a blinding vanity, to bring irretrievable ruin upon a husband, rather than forego the superfluous trimmings of a pride rendered so contemptible. Never could that honourable nature descend so far from its own lofty level, as to make common cause with the daring and despicable swindler,

tricking some deluded tradesman without the mockery of an excuse for such heartless profligacy. Never, above all, could that beautiful instinct of the delicate woman, which, amidst all her hoydenisms and loud laughter, ever kept her exquisitely feminine, be so untrue to itself as to permit her to be betrayed into debt, with all the scheming, falsehood, humiliation, and disgrace, that, under such circumstances, inevitably follow in its train.

Oh! no. Sweet Mrs. Aspenall was the last woman in the world, who could have procured all those expensive luxuries for which she had such a taste, by dint of keeping her name in every tradesman's book, who could not afford to give such credit, and dared not ask for his money. She could not be guilty of any meanness; such sordid trickery was out of the question.

If this had been her plan, moreover, all would have known it as freely as herself. How was it possible that she could be invariably open-minded, with such oppressive matters to conceal? how rattle on always so unrestrainedly, when there was so much in reserve?

"Unless to serve or save somebody very near and dear to you," said we to her one day, "would it be possible for you to keep a secret, with that transparent countenance, and your unchecked habit of letting speech run away with thought?"

"Oh, yes! to be sure," returned she, with a laugh that showed how far her feeling was from displeasure; "I never had but one secret, and that I have kept close enough. Never was I sly but on one point, and what it is, I don't now at all mind confessing to you—"

"Nay, I mustn't—"

"Oh, but you must. I want you to be in my confidence. The fact is, I have always been very sly *about my smuggling!*"

"About your sm—"

"Hush-h!" said she, "*mum!*"

And with her long finger placed on her rosy mouth, and a look that said she should come and tell us all about it presently, she glided to the door of the apartment to welcome in a visitor, whom we, in our astonishment and horror, expected to see transform himself into a custom-house officer of great experience, under her very eyes!

"My smuggling! Sly about my smuggling!" Powers of mystery, who made a riddle of man's nature, here unravel woman's; and of all woman's, the complex Mrs. Aspenall's! The words just quoted we echoed, awake or asleep, the long night through.

"My smuggling; I have always been sly about my smuggling!" Oh! all ye quintessences of nature's purest qualities, which, wonderfully commingling, constitute the divinity that is in woman! then Mrs. Aspenall was a smuggler after all!

Here was the soul of honour for you! Here the nature that could scarcely compass the imagination of a meanness! Here the spirit that, gay and giddy as it might seem, would start up in beautiful and instinctive scorn of trickery and deception! As for fraud—

"As far from fraud, as heaven from earth,"

had appeared until this moment that queen of the motley tribe of smugglers. But now the lofty and ingenuous being, all nobleness and simplicity, had fallen from her pedestal into the thickest of the mire wherein the mercenary and degraded are content to grovel.

The spirit of truth had palmed off falsehoods by the score; the childlike heart had shown the plague-spots of the world upon it; and the gentle, frank-hearted woman had become a slave to her vanity, a dupe to her

cunning, the victim of her poor, sordid desire to shine, at reduced cost and by secret contrivance, by evading the law, defrauding the state, and deriding the most sacred obligations of honour.

"Sly about my smuggling!" The words were not out of our ears the whole night. That a woman of sense, a creature of sensibility, a thing of delicate imagination, a being accustomed to feel and to reflect, should ever have conceived the one most unnatural idea of all; that she could possibly look more beautiful in smuggled velvet, silk, and lace.

Sleep, induced by the constant reiteration of the word "smuggling," came upon us at last; the latest feeling being such a sensation as might have been produced by the light finger of Mrs. Aspenall pressed upon our lips, with a soft, expressive "mum," murmured in the half-dreaming ear. And then followed a brilliant spectacle, which we shall endeavour, however faintly, to pourtray.

"In a magnificent saloon, glittering with lights, innumerable as the stars, but brighter, and decorated profusely with wonderfully-scented flowers just gathered in Araby, sat upon her throne of purest ivory, the Queen of the Isle of Honour; incomparably attired, and surrounded by a court of ladies, lovelier than thousands of clustered lilies, winging and whirling about like fire-flies, and glittering like diamond-beetles around their insect-queen.

"Presently entered there, among the maids of honour, who adorned the favoured isle, one more lovely and majestic than the rest, and her brilliant attire eclipsed in lustre every dress in the court, save the queen's only. The distinguished beauty turned her face to a full blaze of light; it was no other than the charming Mrs. Aspenall herself. At the head of the

long line of maids of honour, all whose gay costumes looked dim and faded beside hers, she was about to be presented to the smiling queen of the isle; when, just as she approached an eminent lady (it was the Chancellor of the Exchequer of Honour) seated at the royal right hand, an unaccountable change took place all in an instant, beginning with Mrs. Aspenall, whose finery at once fell off like unhappy Cinderella's. Her rich, rare lace hung in tatters; her drapery disappeared, as though instantaneously devoured by myriads of moral moths; her jewels turned to toads' eyes, and her golden ornaments into coffin-nails. In less than a sixty-thousandth part of a second, her gorgeous attire was but a miserable bunch of rags, and of these there were not enough to keep her warm; for she stood shivering in the midst of the spacious and desolate hall, alone and in darkness; a scarecrow that had frighted away all that was lovely, innocent, and noble among the ladies of the Isle of Honour."

MUM!

III.

LITTLE Johnny Stint was said to have been born with a wooden ladle in his mouth. The mouth was a wide one, to be sure, but he was always as chary and economical of the words which came out of it, as he was scant of good things to put into it.

The silver spoons of the world did not treat their brother of a less fortunate destiny with much consideration. As a child, he was a mere picker-up of scraps from the nurseries of the well-fed; as a boy, he was kicked upon errands, rather than sent upon them; and as a young man, the utmost favour he ever obtained from the fair, was the permission graciously accorded him by a maid-of-all-work at a school, to come and clean the boots and shoes for her on a Saturday, to which were

subsequently added, as a voluntary token that her heart was softening, the knives, and forks.

A ray of hope once shot across his mind, as standing under a parlour-window in a quiet suburb, he heard a young lady singing to the dislocated remains of a piano, the touching ballad,

"She loved him because he was poor."

"Because he was poor!" mentally ejaculated the neglected Stint. "Well, that is an odd reason. How fond she would have been of me! She would have loved me better at night than at morning, and more on Wednesday than on Tuesday."

But Johnny, though so poor and hopeless, was an upright little fellow. His wants were few, and his wishes not much more numerous. He never flinched from a little sharp work, if it brought him in anything; and if he disliked his lot, he had too scanty a supply of words to indulge in long complaints. He went on his way not rejoicing, but whistling moodily; much happier, perhaps, than people thought him, if they thought about him at all; and infinitely more honest than they had any notion of, when they carelessly said of him,

"You may trust Johnny; he is too humble for temptation, and too insignificant to be a rogue."

When he had less to eat than usual, he curtailed his appetite as he best could; and when he had a little extra supply, he stored it in a right saving spirit against the next necessitous season. But never was he known to break off the loose corner of a loaf which he was sent to purchase, or to pocket a single potato out of the eight-and-twenty pounds which he was always ready to bring from the next market on the chance of getting a penny or two for his pains.

In this creeping existence he continued for some time

after he had arrived at those years of discretion at which discreetness is so scarce; growing more indifferent to privation, but somewhat less used to it; as honest as at first, and a little more contented than ever; when one day, in a lonely spot, nobody near, and his pockets almost empty, Johnny Stint found a purse.

Having picked it up and examined the prize; having with trembling fingers, and with dim, straining, disbelieving eyes, counted the gold and silver it contained; Johnny looked all around, as if in expectation of seeing the frantic owner of the treasure ready to rush upon him, and screaming "That's mine." But not a creature was within view. Johnny then looked up to heaven, as though means might be miraculously supplied of depositing the purse there, until the true claimant should appear; and then again he gazed all around him, examined the bright contents once more, exercised his little powers of arithmetic with the same result as at first; and then returning the pieces one by one, closed his hand as tightly as he could upon the precious store, and buried both hand and purse in the depth of a capacious breeches-pocket.

On he walked, looking very often on the ground, glancing here and there, as though other purses might be scattered about; and not unfrequently he looked up to the sky, as though the treasure could only have dropped thence; with a notion, too, in his mind, that somebody there had already made a note of its amount, as well as of the name of the finder.

On he walked still, with varying feelings, but one uppermost of all—the feeling of a man who has done a good day's work for himself.

"He ought to give me half-a-crown out of this," said Johnny Stint to himself, as he trudged along, squeezing the solid purse in his hand, as if he never

could be sure enough that he held it at the very bottom of his pocket in delightful security.

"Two shillings, or even half-a-crown," repeated John, a little misgivingly, but inwardly sure of a reward of some magnitude.

But other thoughts presently succeeded to these calculations of reward founded on the loser's gratitude. Johnny Stint thought of the loser's present feelings; of his despair, his agony; of the purposes to which he might have been about to apply the money; of the debts he might have contemplated paying; of the wife and children who might be doomed to misery by the want of it: but then his thoughts as speedily recurred to the joy which the now unhappy loser would experience on the restoration of his treasure, not a farthing missing. And lastly, his silent meditations wandered back (selfishness is the universal vice, and Johnny must be pardoned) to the old point, the reward.

"At least," was his modest reflection, "he can hardly do less than give me a shilling, for this is a good long walk."

Just as he arrived at this comforting conclusion, he arrived also at a wayside public-house. His heart felt as warm within him as the hand that burned with the clutch of the gold; and he paused, inspired with the novel idea of cooling both with a small draught of the smallest ale that was to be had for money. He had a few halfpence left, and was confident of a grand supply soon.

Boldly, therefore, he approached, perhaps with something of a little swagger (but this may be imaginary), to make the unusual call, when around the door of the beer-shop he found a small group of persons aiding in the search for a sixpence which had been dropped by a tiny urchin, who could not look about for it for crying.

"Father 'll give anybody a halfpenny who 'll find it for me, that he will," sobbed out the boy.

"Will he!" broke in a harsh voice from a corner of the settle at the door of the house; "then he 'll give more than I got when I found a purse all full o' gold and silver in the turnip-field across yonder."

The little assembly, all except the broken-hearted urchin, turned to look at the speaker; and Johnny Stint in particular rivetted his eyes upon him.

The man had on a labourer's dress, much the worse for wear; he had a sullen face, which drink had not improved; and there was about him a reckless and disorderly air, which was anything but prepossessing.

"Ay," said he between the puffs of his tobacco-smoke, observing that his remark had drawn inquiring looks upon him, "more than I ever got when I picked up Squire Goulden's purse two year ago. He never handed out a ha'penny, though I found it off the squire's property, trudged wi' it four mile to the hall, and gi'ed it into his own hand. Blistered be it wi' the hot goold! All I got was to be told I had stolen some on it, for there was more in't when 'twas lost; and instead o' coming here wi' the reward o' honesty, I went wi' constable to jail, till they liked to let me out. That comes o' poor men finding rich men's money."

Johnny Stint was all ear; yet his eyes were by no means idle. They searched the face of the speaker, as if by close looking his eyes could hear too. But as the man's voice ceased, the countenance resumed its expression of sullen indifference, not unmixed with savage scorn, and a thicker cloud of tobacco-smoke was the only sign of further emotion visible.

John, who had at first been rudely moved, in his way, by the boy's trouble, now stood looking on while others were searching about, without feeling the slightest in-

terest in their success. His glances fell carelessly round, and then settled again upon the face of the smoker, who was at least equally indifferent to all that was going on. Then did John Stint turn his eyes down the lane before him, which led from the town towards which he had been wending, and across wide fields; and with a half-convulsive grip of the purse in his pocket, which his right hand had never quitted, he turned from the house without calling for the ale, and slowly bent his steps towards the open country.

When he had gone a good way down the lane, he stopped and looked back, but again went on; and then presently, after a second pause, he turned suddenly and came back up the lane at a much quicker pace, as if with the intention of returning to the beer-shop, or of making his way into the town. But he once more stopped, looking neither up at the sky nor on the path before him, but intently at the distant houses; then glancing about him, he drew his right hand from his pocket, and gazed keenly at it without unclosing it. It was slowly returned, and with the action his face was again turned towards the fields, which he approached with seemingly irresolute steps. One final pause he made at the end of the lane, and then he hurried onwards across the grass, and was seen no more.

What were the meditations of poor Johnny Stint as he hastened on his devious and solitary course across the country; what were his speculations concerning Squire Goulden, and the probabilities of his being the owner of the second purse; what his fears of being accused of theft because unable to prove that the money given up was exactly the amount of the money found; what his new-born and intoxicating ideas (if any) of another kind of life from that moment to be commenced

by himself under the spur of a terrible temptation, nobody ever knew.

But this is known to many: that in a noted city, some hundred miles away from the scene we have just quitted, little Johnny Stint was greatly esteemed and patronised, about three years afterwards, as Mr. John Stint, landlord of the Crown Hotel. The surrounding gentry nodded, and the best of tradespeople shook hands. He was a flourishing and highly respectable member of society, and seemed to know it.

Stint belied his name, for profusion was the order of the day at the crack hotel. Customers who ran a long score would sometimes gratefully wonder whence their prosperous host had sprung; how, from opening a little daily eating-house for mechanics, he had leaped into the proprietorship of the famous "Crown;" but on this subject, as on everything that related to the past, there was one explanatory monosyllable employed as a wind-up by all, landlord as well as guests, and it was made more impressive by the forefinger being placed upon the lip, a knowing nod completing the mysterious emphasis.

Of the future Mr. Stint was less shy of talking, although, as of old, he never talked too much. His doings, however, unfortunately for him, outstripped his sayings. He promised to erect a new billiard-room, but he betook himself to hazard of an afternoon. He engaged to keep an excellent stable, suited to a splendid establishment, but he was seduced into the glory of breeding racers, and, what was worse, of betting upon them.

At length, or rather after no great lapse of time, when the dice were in his hand and a trusty partner at his elbow, "mum" became the favourite word in the

mouth of Mr. John Stint, and sadly to his loss of credit, he forgot that even so small a monosyllable might possibly be overheard; the admonition to silence thus acting as the precursor to detection. So, too, however cleverly the loss of a race might be projected, the magic phrase "mum," which had power to seal a jockey's lips to-day, had no effect in stopping his ears to the offer of a better bribe to-morrow; and by such gaps in his system of secrecy was our miserable little hero somewhat rapidly reduced from respectable John Stint to roguish little Johnny.

It was in this latter character that he was one day transported for stealing a silver spoon, which had lately been his own property.

Alas! for the wooden ladle with which he was born! Had he kept it yet a little longer, held it fast when sorely tempted to fling it away, it would have fed him after some fashion, and been changed in the end to an inheritance, richer than plates and dishes of purest gold.

THE FROLICS OF TIME.

A STRIKING ADVENTURE.

How I came to find myself, at midnight and in the dark, stretched on a sofa in a strange house, is of no consequence to my story; yet, for the prevention of all uncharitable surmises, it may be as well to mention, that the young friend whom I had deemed it prudent to see safe home from Greenwich to Lewisham, had participated more freely than I had in the revelries that some times succeed to whitebait; and that, tired and sleepy, I had not irrationally preferred the scanty accommoda-

tion of a sofa, proffered by the old servant, the family being in bed, to a return to town on a wet and dreary night.

"This will do very well," I said, drowsily glancing at the length of a sofa in a large room on the ground-floor; and released from my boots only, I declined the offer of bedclothes, and declared that I should sleep without rocking. "No, no, pray don't leave the light," cried I, as the venerable domestic set down in the fireplace a huge old-fashioned candle-shade, through the numerous round holes of which a rushlight gloomily flickered. "I hate that abominable invention; it 's the only thing that *could* keep me awake for two minutes. That 'll do; shut the door; good night."

"Got away sober after all!" I whispered approvingly to myself when thus left alone. "And what 's better, I 've got this wild, racketty young scapegrace safe home too; early moreover, though he thinks it 's so late;—I should never have dragged him away if I hadn't vowed by the beard of old Time that the church-clock had struck twelve three hours ago; but it 's hardly twelve yet, I think; pledged my honour it was past two! Ah, well! Yaw-au! ah!" And here my thoughts were silently settling upon another subject, previously to the last seal of sleep being fixed upon my lids, when my drowsy senses were disturbed by a dull, dead sound in the air, at no great distance from the house; it was the church-clock striking twelve. I counted the strokes. Midnight sure enough! And somehow at that moment it occurred to my mind that I had taken Time's name in vain rather too roundly, and had vowed by his sacred beard rather irreverently to say the least, when I protested three times over, that no soul living would hear the clock strike twelve again *that* night!

No matter; it was a fib told to serve a good pur-

pose; a little bit of evil done quite innocently; the end sanctifies the means! And in the space of three seconds I was again more than half asleep, when another clock struck; another, nearer and clearer than the last. It was a large full-toned house-clock, fixed probably on the staircase or the hall, though I had not observed it on entering. Its sounds were prolonged and solemn. Again I counted the strokes—twelve; which I had no sooner done, than a third clock struck, nearer to me still, for it was evidently in the room, at the further end; and so sharp and quick in succession were the strokes, that to count them would have been difficult, even had I been less startled by them than I was.

What a very curious clock! thought I; and during the second that was ocupied by its striking, I raised my head and looked in the direction of the sound; the apartment might be miles or feet long, for aught that I could *see*. The curtains and shutters were closed; no scrap of the window was to been; no glimpse even of the dull damp night without was to be had. All was Darkness——

But not Silence; for before I could again shut my eyes, a clock began to strike, slowly, softly, in tones "most musical, most melancholy," right over my head, as though it were fixed to the wall only a few feet above me. Every sound was like the moan of a dying bird. I counted them; twelve as before. Yes, it was a clock that struck; it *must* be a clock; and it was right almost to a minute, by the church. What was there wonderful in that? Nothing, only—

Hark! the chimes, too, at midnight! On a table almost within my reach, some merry Sprite seemed, to the ear of my imagination, performing a serenade to the lingering hour of Twelve. He struck up the chimes with such a lively grace, and echoed them with such a

ringing laugh, that the twelve sounds which announced the hour when he ceased, lost all the usual monotony of tone, and said, not merely in melody, but almost as distinctly as words could have said it, "Twelve o'clock," four times over. I jumped up, and sat for an instant, my drowsiness all gone and my eyes unusually wide open, looking into the darkness around me. I knew that there was a table close by, but neither table nor clock was visible in that utter gloom; not a trace of any form or figure could my straining sight discover.

To grope my way six feet forward, and feel upon the surface of the table, whether, among the ornaments which there, as in other parts of the room, I had carelessly noted when first shown in, a *clock* was to be numbered, seemed easy enough; but scarcely had I stretched out, in fear and gentleness, one trembling hand upon that venturous errand, when I dropped back again upon the sofa, startled half out of my wits by the sudden striking of two more clocks, two at once, one loud, one low, apparently at opposite sides of the room; and before they had finished twelve strokes each, another, as though from a station in the centre of the chimney-piece, struck up "Meet me by moonlight," in notes the sweetest and silveriest imaginable, and the dozen strokes that followed were like the long plaintive tones of an Eolian harp. Before they were quite over, a peel of tiny bells began tinkling. Fairies tripping with bells at their feet could hardly have made lighter or quicker music. I began to think that a troop of that fabulous fraternity were actually in the apartment; that a host of little elves were capering about, not only with bells to their feet, but clocks to their stockings!

"Can these be clocks?" I asked myself! "Whatever the others may be, this surely is no clock!" But the unpleasant suspicion had no sooner crossed my

brain, than the bell-ringing ceased, and one, two, three; yes, twelve fine-toned strokes of a clock were distinctly audible. "It *is* a clock," I whispered; but this conviction scarcely lessened the mystery, which, though amusing, was ill-timed. I would have preferred any glimmer of a rushlight to darkness, and sleep to any musical entertainment. The wish had hardly time to form itself before another clock struck close by me, and between every stroke of the twelve came a sort of chirrup, which at a more suitable hour I should have thought the prettiest note in the world, but which was now considerably more provoking than agreeable. I looked, but still saw nothing. I put my hand out and felt about; it touched something smooth; glass, evidently glass; and the fear of doing damage would have been sufficient to deter me from prosecuting my researches in that direction, even if my attention had not been at that instant summoned away, by a sudden volley of sounds that made my very heart leap, and transfixed me to the couch breathless with wonder and alarm.

This was the simultaneous striking of at least half-a-dozen more clocks, in various parts of the room. Some might be large, and some tiny enough, some open, and some inclosed in cases; for the tones were manifold, and of different degrees of strength; but no two clocks, if clocks they were, which I doubted, were constructed on the same principle, for each seemed to strike upon a plan of its own; and yet all went on striking together, as though doomsday had arrived, and each was afraid of being behind time, and too late to proclaim the fact!

One of these, a very slow coach, kept striking long after the others had ceased; and before this had finished, off went a clock in the corner that was furthest

from me, sending such a short, sharp, rapid sound into the apartment, that I strained my eyes yet a little wider than ever, half in expectation of being able to *see* it. On it went striking; "six;" "nine, ten;" "twelve, thirteen!" What! "nineteen, twenty!" There was no mistake in the reckoning, "twenty-four!" What, twice twelve! Yes, three times and four times twelve! Still it went on striking; strike, strike, strike, strike! How I wished, in that darkness, that it would strike a light!

Still the same sound; one monotonous, metallic twang, reverberating through the room, and repeating itself as though it were impossible to have too much of a good thing. That clock seemed to be set going for ever, to be wound up for eternity instead of time. It appeared to be labouring under the idea that doomsday had indeed arrived, that it was no longer necessary to note and number the hours accurately, that the family of the Clocks were free, that the old laws which governed them were abolished, and that every member of the body was at liberty to strike as long as it liked, and have a jolly lark in its own way!

Strike, strike; still it persevered in its monotony, till, just as I had made up my mind that it would never stop, it stopped at about a hundred and forty-four, having struck the hour twelve times over. But two or three more competitors, whether from the walls of the room, from the chimney-piece, or the tables, had set out practising with wonderful versatility before the lengthened performance just alluded to had quite concluded; nor was it until nearly half-an-hour had elapsed since the church clock, the leader of the strike, had struck twelve, the hour which I had declared by the beard of old Father Time to be passed and gone, that an interval of silence occurred, and peace again

prevailed through the intense darkness of the apartment.

Yet, can I call it peace? It was only peace comparatively; for my ear, now sensitively awake to catch even the faintest whisper of a sound, and all my senses nervously alive in expectation of another convulsion amongst the clockwork, I became conscious of noises going on around me, to which, on first lying down, free from suspicion of the near neighbourhood of mystery, my ear was utterly insensible. I detected the presence of a vast multitude of small sounds distributed through the room, and repeating themselves regularly with singular distinctness as I listened. My pulse beat quicker, my eyes rolled anxiously, and then closed; those minute noises, clear and regular, went on in endless repetition, neither faster nor slower. Were they indeed the tickings of a hundred clocks? the fine, low, inward breathings of Time's children!

The speculation, little favourable to sleep, was suddenly cut short by another crash of sound, breaking in upon the repose; it was half-past twelve, and of the scores of clocks that had announced the midnight hour, one-half now announced the march of thirty minutes more; some by a simple ding-dong, some by a single loud tick, others by chimes, and one or two by a popular air, or a sort of jug-jug like a nightingale. Again I started up and listened; again I essayed to grope my way about the room, to find out by the test of touch, whether the place was indeed filled with time-pieces and chronometers, Dutch repeaters and eight-day clocks. But so completely had the noises bewildered me, that I knew not which way to turn, and had I dared to wander, at the hazard of overturning some fancy table or curious cabinet, I should never have found my way back to my couch again. Down upon it, therefore, I once more

threw myself; and—conscious still of the multitudinous tickings that seemed to people the apartment with sprites, not a span long, dancing in fetters—invoked kind nature's restorer, balmy sleep; and at length, nearly exhausted, dropped into a doze.

This was but short-lived; for my ears remained apprehensively opened, although my eyes were sealed, and the pealing sound of the church-clock striking one awoke me again to a disagreeable anticipation of another general strike. Once more I sought to penetrate with anxious gaze the profound darkness before me. "Was it all a delusion?" I exclaimed. "Have I been dreaming? Is the room actually filled with clocks, or am I the victim of enchantment?" The answer came from the outside of the room, from the huge family dispenser of useful knowledge, the clock on the staircase, whose lengthened uhr-r-r-rh, preparatory to the stroke of one, was a warning worthy of the sonorous announcement. I felt it strike upon my heart; it convinced me that I had not dreamt; it foretold all; and I knew that the Spirits of the Clock would immediately be at work again. And to work they went fast enough; chimes and chirrups, merry-bells and moanings of birds; sometimes the cuckoo's note, sometimes the owl's hoot; the trickling of water-drops imitated now, and now the rattling of silver fetters; here a scrap of a melody, and there a shrill whistling cry; all followed; in a tone thin or full, loud or weak, according to the construction of the unseen instrument; by the single stroke, proclaiming the hour of one!

I sank back, with my eyes close shut, and my hands covering up my ears. What a long night had I passed in a single hour! how many hours were yet to be counted before light, piercing the gloom, would reveal the mystery of the clocks, and point the way to deliver-

ance; that is, to the door. At last there was quiet again, the tickings only excepted, which continued low and regular as before. Sleep crept over me, interrupted only by the chimes, and other musical intimations at the quarters and the half-hour. And then came two o'clock, awaking me once more to a conviction that the hundred clocks, *if* clocks, were wound up for the night; or that the spirits who were playing off their pranks, possibly in revenge for my "innocent imposition" touching the flight of Time, and my irreverence towards the beard of that antiquarian, were resolved to show me no mercy.

Off they went, clock after clock; silver, copper, and brass all spoke out, separately and in concert; wheels within wheels went round, chain after chain performed its appointed functions; hammers smote, and bells rang; and then, at last, fidgetted out of my senses, and "fooled to the top of my bent," sleep as before came to my aid; broken at intervals; and at intervals bringing visions of Time chained to the wall, and unable to stir a foot; of Time flying along upon a railroad fifty miles an hour, leaving Happiness behind mounted on a tortoise; of Time's forelock, by which I would have fondly taken him, coming off in my hand because he wore a wig; of Time shaving off his reverend beard, and starting away at the beginning of a new year, a gay, smart, glowing juvenile!

* * * I found out in the morning that my young friend's father was that oddest of oddities, a collector of clocks; that he had a passion for them, seeking out a choice clock as a connoisseur seeks out a choice picture, that he was continually multiplying his superfluities, that he boasted clocks of every form and principle, down to the latest inventions; clocks that played the genteelest of tunes, and clocks that struck the hour a

dozen times over as many different ways; and that there were eighty-five, more or less calculated to strike, in the apartment wherein I had—*slept;* in the Clockery!

THE FOOL AND HIS MONEY.

"The most noisy of all hatreds is hatred of the rich for the love of the riches. Look well to him who is always railing at coaches and four. Book him as a man to be bribed.—PAUL CLIFFORD.

THE late John Screw, Esq., who died the other day, was known a long time ago, when the said "Esq.," inscribed on the lid of his superb coffin, was a dignity undreamed of; was known, I say, all over the parish by his loud railing at the rich. There was but one ruling principle in his nature, and to that he gave the title of a contempt for riches; but perhaps hostility, less to the thing than the possessor of it, would have been a more accurate designation. We shall see.

Screw was no disbeliever in human goodness. He had a soul large enough to conceive and to rejoice in the existence of every virtue. Not only did he believe in them all, but, had their number been doubled, it would have been his pride to have reposed equal trust in the additions, whatever they were. His faith embraced the most apocryphal excellencies, without inquiring into their character.

Of course, the more accredited and popular virtues, such as patriotism, temperance, probity, charity, gratitude, &c., were all high on his list, as virtues not only indisputably existent, but extensively practised.

There was, however, one important and impassable limit to their existence. They could not; no, not one

of them, according to his belief; breathe by any possibility their natural vital breath within the boundary which separates the rich from the rest of mankind. There was something in the chink of gold that scared them; the very rustle of a bank-note put the boldest virtue to flight. John Screw held it next to impossible for a rich man to be virtuous.

Upon his rule, therefore, the noble quality of patriotism was exclusively confined to the bosoms of those to whom their beloved country scarcely afforded a crust; temperance was nowhere to be found save in the breasts of the penniless and the friendless, wandering within the cold precincts of the parish pump; probity was the distinguishing merit of people evermore tempted by anguish, disease, and famine to be dishonest; charity was the essential excellence of persons so cruelly placed, as to have not a crumb of bread to give away; and gratitude was the prime virtue of good folks who had nothing on earth to be thankful for.

But by whomsoever these qualities may be possessed, the rich, in his view, had them not. That was always a settled point. He looked upon a man who had amassed much wealth, in a light exactly opposite to that in which he is regarded in the great world, where he is always a *good* man. He attached none but the hardest and most literal meaning to the definition of money as the root of all evil; and insisted upon the perpetuity of the principle which describes a relationship between rich men and camels, in reference to heaven and the eye of the needle.

The heart's sunshine, in a smile of loving-kindness, would diffuse itself over his face as he listened to the eulogium justly pronounced upon the character of some beneficent stranger. Speak of the good man's filial piety, his fatherly devotion, his unbounded philanthropy,

his unimpeachable justice; his meekness, generosity, and honour; and the soul of Screw would seem to start into his eyes in glistening tears, appear to sit there with a fond and ardent look, silently singing pæans in the excellent creature's praise. But add to this intelligence concerning his gifts and advantages that this good Christian was as rich as a Jew, and the diffused smile of brotherly love and admiration would instantly gather itself up into the gloomiest and most sceptical scowl imaginable, and with a single shrug of the shoulders he would shake off every rag of the flowing sympathies in which he had arrayed himself.

He would listen believingly, while you confined your list of a man's endowments to every exalted virtue under heaven; but talk not of his Three-and-a-half per Cents.

Screw's look, while you expatiated on the deeds of another Howard, would plainly say, "God-like creature!" but just add, at the close of the eulogy, "and he's *so* rich," the look would instantly furnish as intelligible a commentary, "Precious rascal!"

While led to suppose his new neighbour somewhat needy, he would launch forth with astonishing fervour in his praise, proving that the unknown was of a nature so incorruptible and lofty, that had *he* been placed originally in Paradise instead of Adam, man would never have fallen at all. But when the fact crept out (as all secrets will, though a commission be issued for their suppression), that his purest of all possible neighbours was assessed very heavily to the income-tax, Screw without a moment's delay discovered, that he was a wretch who would not mind stewing his own legitimate child, to make a wash for some shameless Narcissa of his acquaintance.

This loud railing at the rich was not unheard in the

parish, nor did it fail to elicit observations concerning the railer.

"His poverty must plead his excuse," said the great majority, who did not in the least dislike to hear him, for the pleasure of telling him in return how they did not exactly think that he was always in the right; not always; and how they had once known of a rich man who was really uncommonly kind at heart, although he had a curious way of showing it. And everybody concluded by saying,

"Screw will never get on at this rate. Rich folks do not like to hear the truth told at all hours. No, poor he is, and poor he will ever remain."

But hatred of the knavery and heartlessness allied to wealth was not John Screw's sole characteristic; it was accompanied by as intense and dignified a scorn of the stupidity which he imputed to the rich. He always associated a full purse with an empty head. When he saw a superb carriage sweep by, its happy inmate lolling in luxuriant and soft-cushioned repose, the image brought to the mind of Screw, through the medium of his eyes, was that of a fat, heavy, indolent fool, who just knew that the day was Friday, and his county Devon. His unalterable conviction was, that the children of the rich were sent to College merely to learn the doctrine, that education is superfluous; they are simply taught to know the one truth, that knowledge is unnecessary.

In the midst of his tirade against the fools, as the certain and constant inheritors of the goods of fortune, some enthusiast, ignorant of the nature of the beast, would try to stop him.

"Granting that riches often fall to the fool's lot, why complain? Would you be so savagely cruel as to wish

to fasten on the afflicted fool the burden of poverty, as an addition to his misfortune? Nature generally balances her gifts very nicely. To the labouring masses, she often gives strong health and activity of life; to the intellectual, poverty, for it requires a philosophic mind to bear the evil; and on the rich she bestows—"

"Intense and incurable ignorance," would be Screw's interposition on every occasion. "Well, never mind," continued he, "the fool and his money are soon parted; Fortune, before she fills his pocket, cuts a hole in it."

And all the parish declared that it was highly imprudent of John Screw to speak as he habitually spoke of his landlord the squire, of the wealthy member for the borough, of his worship the rich justice, and of the bishop of the diocese. At the same time everybody declared,

"It 's very plain and downright dealing, this of Screw's. He sticks to his principles, as all must own. Honest he is, and honest he will ever remain."

It is as easy, while you are about it, to prophesy eternal honesty as perpetual poverty; and this prediction of the parish was worthy to pair off with the other, which foretold that the railer at monied men would never be rich himself. But the character of the parish for unusual profundity in obtaining a private view of the decrees of fate, was considerably shaken, by an incident that graced the very next election for the neighbouring borough-town.

His landlord the squire, and his worship the justice, and the wealthy ex-member himself, had, throughout the period of canvassing, vainly endeavoured to win the vote of John Screw. The honest man was not to be had: The soliciting parties were rich enough amongst them to buy the whole borough; and therefore he had

no faith in their principles. He admired the breadth of their views, but took an objection to the depth of their purses.

The election-morning dawned, the poll opened, the contest ran fearfully close; every quarter of an hour came the squire, the justice, and the rich candidate, resolute to subdue the unconquerable repugnance of Screw to a representative with a pound in his pocket. Never was such perseverance witnessed on either side.

The feeling manifested by honest John at one o'clock in the day amounted to a provoking pig-headedness; at two it had acquired the dignity of a determined obstinacy; by three it had become a great moral firmness; by half-past it had arisen to a noble fixedness of pure principle; at a quarter to four it had swollen into an exalted inflexibility of purpose; and at five minutes to the hour mentioned, when it had burst into a sublime grandeur of soul dazzling the beholder, it gave way all on a sudden; and John Screw, yielding himself to the soft persuasions of his wealthy suppliant, was escorted to the poll, linked arm in arm with the exulting squire and the condescending justice.

The seat was won by purity of election and the single vote of honest John Screw; but unhappily it was lost again, not two months after, by the vote of a committee of the House, affirming purity of election to be nothing but gross bribery. At the contest which followed, Screw, who had disconcerted the parish prophets before by supporting the man of wealth in the crisis of fate, now again baffled their speculations, by voting, not for the rich candidate whom his vote had returned at the last election, but for a much richer candidate, who starting against him was for more purity still.

And as a similar result ensued, and a third, nay, a fourth, fifth, and sixth election took place for the inde-

pendent borough, within the space of a year or two, Screw had repeated opportunities of acting upon his conviction that money is the root of all evil; which he did by voting invariably for the richest candidate; and always, it was observed, at a very *late* period of the contest, as though his convictions required the greatest possible time to adjust themselves conscientiously.

It was observed in the progress of these events, that people by degrees ceased to make reference to the poverty of plain John Screw; at all events, they ceased to be of opinion that he would remain poor all his days. At the same time they left off discoursing about his downright honesty; and not a soul within the bounds of the parish was ever after heard to predict, that let who might be a hypocrite, honest John would be himself to the end of all things.

It was also to be noticed that from the date of this change an alteration took place, insensibly perhaps, in the tone of Screw towards the corrupt, the cold, the selfish, the hateful rich. Prosperous people were no longer snakes in the grass, stinging him wheresoever he walked. Men of enormous wealth might cross his path without crossing his spirit. They rolled passed him like moving money-bags, and he railed not at all. He saw the possessor of ten thousand a year snugly cushioned in his carriage, with his sleek head comforted in velvet, and the idea of an ignorant fatness, a lordly and upstart stupidity parading its wealth and affecting dignity, never once shot into his mind. The monied classes no longer seemed to him the grinders of the cheated poor; nor did the middle class imitate the rich, and oppress in their turn, while worshipping the golden calf. He ceased to call the art of growing rich, knavery under the sanctity of law; and when he looked upon a man who could reckon up his rent-roll by

thousands, he muttered, reverentially, "That 's no fool!"

Very far wrong was the "everybody," who vowed that John Screw would always be poor; for he died the other day leaving a hundred thousand pounds behind him. Equally wrong were the same good people when they protested that he would always be honest, for he wrung this amount of hard cash, "how he could," out of that gold mine to the iron-handed grasper, the pressing wants of the embarrassed and the honourable. John Screw never missed the chance of coining a farthing by any legal means, and never possessed a farthing that he did not make breed. He always tried hard for twins; but farthing for farthing he would get.

He realised, as the builder up of a fortune, the withering and deadly triumph of his own early theory, that the rich man is a compound of the knave and the fool; and he died the victim to a blind faith in his favourite maxim, that a fool and his money are soon parted. John Screw never discovered that the greatest of fools is he who does not know how to part with it.

The consequence of this mistake of his, that what it is wise to acquire in all circumstances it is folly to part with in any, hung with the gloom of a black winter-cloud over the remainder of his cold, spare, anxious, shivering existence. He might have had the respect of the political party he opposed, and the applause of that he assisted; he might have avoided the accusing cries of children pursuing him in sleep; the frantic looks of wives and mothers famine-stricken; the savage imprecations of wretches suffering almost under the death-struggle in his relentless grasp. But he was a vulgar, dull-witted knave in the acquisition of riches, embodying all the villany which the keen and eager eyes of his hatred had ever seen in rich men.

Again, he might have surrounded himself with smiling children and cheerful acquaintances; he might have had the blazing hearth, the social glass, the laughing gossip, the exquisite companionship of the favourite book; but he was the most absurd, the most abject of all fools in the close keeping of his riches, preferring cold, darkness, abstinence, loneliness within his home; and the scorn of man, the pitying horror of a woman, the very mockery of artless and revelling youth, without.

A little half-pint of brandy would have saved his worthless life when attacked by that last horrible spasm; but a fool and his money are *not* soon parted! Body and soul shall part first!

WANTED A FATHER, A MOTHER, AND A FEW SISTERS.

ANY family in easy circumstances, and of habits by no means strict, that may be disposed to adopt a young man of a gay turn of mind, and of tastes not over particular, would find the advertiser an acquisition. I offer myself without the smallest reservation to any sensible couple, out of the "genteel" circles, who may be desirous of possessing an affectionate son full-grown, and beg leave to rush into their arms at the shortest notice, and without further ceremony. I am perfectly ready to give my unknown sisters a fraternal embrace all round, on the spur of the moment; and am prepared to escort every one of them to the play, to see the pantomime, on the first night of my introduction to the domestic circle.

The fact is, for I 'm candid to a fault, and hate all

circumlocution, I have just, like Norval, left my father's house, and don't mean to return to it. I arrived at man's estate, the only one I'm entitled to, several hours ago; and intend to exhibit considerable discretion for my years, in living upon seven-and-sixpence while I can. It is all I have; and the waiter's bill is not brought in yet. The world is all before me; plenty of "ways," but no "means."

However, go back to the Grampian Hills, in —— street, —— street, Portman-square, I never will. Old Norval (with all reverence be it spoken) wants to be Lord Randolph, and can't. I have the profoundest love and veneration for the family, root and branch; no son was ever more filially framed; but the poet tells us of notes by distance made more sweet, and these are the notes that must pass current between us. All parties will be comfortable apart, but that continual struggle of theirs to hold up their heads would have throttled me. I have been unnaturally "genteel" all my days. I have been playing the part of young Master Somebody from childhood, and never dared to be myself until this very hour. I have been brought up in fetters, crippled past endurance in moral belts and social backboards. I'm a victim to gentility.

I hardly know where to look for a lodging. All the apartments for single gentlemen that meet my eye, whatever the district may be, Pimlico or Spitalfields, are "genteelly" furnished. Catch me in such quarters.

Now, I say, my fine reader, don't start off with the idea, that because I have run away from the paternal domicile I must necessarily be a bit of a vagabond. It is possible, I hope, to be the possessor of three half-crowns only, without being a scamp; and a young fellow at my time of life may abandon the "bosom of his family," without becoming a proselyte to vagabondism;

making of tradesmen's books a flight of steps to a position in society that commands a distinct view of the Insolvent Court in the foreground, with Brixton Mill in perspective. And mind, you will make a grand mistake if you assume that, because I 'm a rather off-hand performer with my pen, and don't call you "candid" or "gentle," or anything of that sort, I 'm either rude in speech or vulgar in my taste. Refinement has its flash dictionary as well as coarseness; and to my thinking, the slang of gentility is quite as stupid and disagreeable as any other. With those who are of opinion that—

"Starch makes the man, and want of it the savage,"

I stand no chance; and if they should agree that plain English is a language never to be spoken to ears polite, why, I'm dumb, that 's all.

The leopard cannot change his spots, and if he could, he would only make himself uglier. What a finikin-minikin would my affectionate sisters have made of me by this time if I had but let them! I should have cut a figure rather more quizzical than Moses Primrose did, when *his* darling sisters fitted him out for the fair, trimming his hair, brushing his buckles, and cocking his hat with pins; dressing him up, in short, for the Jenkinsonian sacrifice beyond all probability of escape. How I used to laugh, to be sure, even though a little scrap of a boy, when the dear prim creatures, just two or three years older than myself, turned up their pretty genteel-looking eyes at certain indications of a genius for the gutter, which at that period I manifested! How they used to warn me that I was never upon any pretence to put my hands in my pockets, and laboured to convince me that there were no such things as breeches! How the refined and sensitive young things would

preach against marbles and hardbake; insisting, with a genteel shudder, that bounce-about was vulgar, and eating bulls'-eyes an ungentlemanly practice!

But as I have my way to make in the world, and appearances are against me, it may be wise to set out with a distinct picture of the grievance I have had to endure in ——— street, near the square. Six words will describe it. It is imaged to the life in a trivial incident that happened but yesterday.

A nice plump specimen of a natural country cousin, the daughter of a plebeian farming relation of ours, had come up to town to find out for the first time what was meant by a Christmas in London; and in upon us she burst (her maiden morning-call in the metropolis), with cheeks horribly rosy, eyes shockingly inclined to sparkle, and a mouth so vulgar as to smile without the smallest disguise as she spoke. There sat my three sisters in buckram, more than a match for Falstaff's four men in ditto. (Haven't I caught it though, often enough, for being so fond of those coarse low plays of Shakspeare! Oh, no, not at all!)

Well; the buckram did n't frighten Lucy Farmer; she began, and she went on, so naturally that it was quite dreadful, about where she was going, and what she was going to see, all agog to inspect every curiosity in London, Aldgate-pump, and St. Paul's among the rest.

"Of course my sisters had seen St. Paul's? Of course they had, often and often? Been up to the top! Ah! how delightful to live in London, and be able to see such wonderful sights every day in the year!"

"No," remarked the eldest of my sisters, with great dignity, "we have never seen St. Paul's, Miss Farmer;" adding, "but of course we have seen engravings of it."

Miss F. opened her eyes, looked incredulous and amazed.

"Never seen St. Paul's! only pictures of it! and you living all your life within a short walk of it! Ah, come now, you *are* taking me for a simpleton."

My sister doubtless felt disgusted beyond expression; but the gentility of her nature prevailed. There was no touch of scorn, but merely a consciousness of superiority, in the low and quiet tone, and the easy condescending dignity with which she explained,

"No, we have never been to St. Paul's, it is *too far east!*"

Lucy Farmer's stare diminished at this; and her face assumed an expression equivalent to the meaning that used to be conveyed by the word "anan;" but I laughed outright in the very faces of the trio in buckram. Yet I ought not to have laughed; for they only told the truth. They had always lived within three miles of St. Paul's, and never *had* been in it; it was too far east! Well, upon second thoughts, I think I ought to have cried; but somehow that Lu, though I hadn't seen her since I was a boy, had put me into such spirits!

It strikes me that the feeling so naïvely expressed by my fair sisters must be the same, ridiculous as it seems, that influences the whole family of fashionables, who rise almost at mid-day. They are shocked at the idea of seeing the sun in the east. They would not behold the daybreak for the world, it is so far east! Do they select vulgar people only to represent her Majesty at Constantinople? This is a point that requires consideration in the polite circles. But to resume.

That horrid haw-haw of mine will never be forgiven while the world stands, never. I could have committed no offence more heinous. I was always from a child forbidden to laugh; it was only low people, they said, who laughed in that loud manner; but somehow I had

a natural turn for this vulgarity, and often have I, after a lecture, stolen away, clapped my hands to my sides, and had my fit out. They once took me to see a pantomime, and scolded me for three weeks afterwards, because by my laughter I attracted the notice of the party in the next box.

Of course we rarely went to the play, indeed never; the genteeler theatres were expensive, in the boxes; and when, in the innocence of my heart, I once proposed that we should all go into the pit, where we should get capital places by starting before the doors opened, there was such a convulsion! I think the "medical attendant," as he was called," was sent for. Henrietta fainted, I know; and poor dear mamma wept bitterly at this fresh symptom of the innate depravity of my spirits. Such degeneracy they were wholly at a loss to account for, but each in turn undertook to lecture me on this infamous project for disgracing my family; until, my patience exhausted, I could n't help singing out, "What a row about nothing at all!" and amidst a general scream was sent off to bed, with the awful intimation that my great-uncle, the general, should be written to on the subject, and *he* would talk to me. My father said afterwards that he should not object to my being taken to the theatre, if they would dramatise "Lord Chesterfield's Advice to his Son."

But that was nothing: never shall I forget the evil day, when on my return home from school after a few weeks' absence, I sprang upstairs and frightened my sister Susanna, by giving her an affectionate chuck under the chin, which I could very well reach, crying out at the same time, with all the lungs that love could lend me, "What, Sue, my old girl!"

The shock was tremendous. I turned pale myself this time at the consequences of my low and boisterous

attempt at endearment, and for a few moments fancied that I should certainly be transported for life. A shell thrown into the quiet drawing-room could not have exploded more fatally. One fell into fits one way, and another another. All had assembled in one group, prim as pigeons, and my salutation acted like a shot. My reprimand, however, was light; for the hysterics left them little strength, and I was off to school in a fortnight, before the effects of the shock had entirely subsided.

As for dinner, instead of bringing me solace to my youthful feelings that stone soup brings to the pining prisoner, it was always a time of trouble for me, and an ordeal which I almost dreaded to go through, in consequence of the extreme precision and formality of the family arrangements. I can't say that my sisters ever administered in so many words, the injunction conveyed in the "New London Spelling-book," "Eat with your knife and fork, and never lick your plate;" nor did they inflict upon me the companion-warning, "Never put your knife into the salt, for it may foul the rest;" because I flatter myself these were *too* superfluous; but they certainly did try to instil into my rebellious mind, from my earliest years, the spirit of certain other regulations for which successive generations are indebted to the nice discriminating views of those profound disciplinarians, the Vyses and Dilworths. I think they may be cited in these terms:

"Never seat yourself at table until *every other person* in the room is seated," and,

"After dinner, *put one hand in the bosom of your waistcoat,* and let the other *fall gracefully on your knee.*" (With liberty to change hands regularly every ten minutes.)

Here we have the spirit if not the letter of the family laws.

"Charles, do not crumble your bread in that manner, but break it gently."

"Charles, I am sorry you should ask for more fish; you know how *impossible* it is to take fish twice."

"Charles, dear, you should never speak upon such subjects (I had only remarked that I was very fond of pickled pork) while the servant's in the room."

Once, when I was about fourteen, knowing no better, I sent up my plate, saying, "I should like a bit of fat;" when they all laid down their knives and forks, looked at each other, and cried, "Well!"

Mamma with a deep sigh, said, "It was very shocking to witness the strange manners of the dear boy;" and my father asked me, "If I thought I was dining with the Esquimaux."

After dinner, Henrietta, the youngest and fondest of my sisters, put her arms elegantly round my neck and wept genteelly, saying, "Dearest Charles, what must the servant have thought of you! *Fat is for our inferiors.*"

The servant, by the way, was a gray-headed old veteran of seventy-two. Other people can count their beads of gentility on the roly-poly buttons of a bit of a boy, to open the door and wait at table; but *my* family could not maintain their rank among the truly genteel without the aid of a regular old file, half dead, and wholly useless, even when first engaged; but then he had the appearance of having been at least half a century in the service of the family, whereas he had probably been five years; being taken on when he *could* just crawl, and retiring when he could not, to make way for an equally venerable retainer cast off for inutility. Anybody can imagine how the house-affairs are carried on under this system; but they cannot so easily conceive the spite and jealousy which the gray-headed

veteran excited among the neighbours in —— street, near the square. They could easily pardon the little display attached to a mere brass-buttoned boy; but they could not forgive the vastly increased respectability attached to the octogenarian retainer of an ancient family; nor, it must be confessed, could they restrain their ridicule when at the end of another five years they found out the trick. Extra-gentility is deucedly apt to get quizzed; but it never finds that out in time.

Now with all this pretension there is a plaguey number of disagreeables on the score of scanty allowance. The truth is, that the flocks on the Grampian-hills are not fat sheep, and the revenue in —— street, near the square, is not equal to the maintenance of high state and dignity. But why hand round the golden chalice when there is nothing but water in it? The maxim in our family is to serve up a half-starved, shabby mutton-chop upon silver. Though we had but gruel for supper, we had it unexceptionably served. Manner was always looked to, and not matter. There was no objection to my drinking a glass of porter upon occasion, because it is cheaper than wine; but happening one summer's day to remark, with a fine natural taste, that I should vastly enjoy a draught "out of the pewter," I was summoned upstairs, and tenderly informed that the inherent profligacy of my mind was becoming fatal to the peace of my family, and that all the blood of all the Howards would fail to purify mine from the taint it had contracted. Affectionate, to be sure! Well, and I *should* have liked a draught out of the pewter, I don't deny it.

Mind, I mustn't have it inferred that they were not affectionate. Oh, no. My revered parents doted upon me, only my clothes sometimes smelt of tobacco-smoke when they embraced me; and I was impressively warned that if I even dared to dream of smoking a cigar in the

house, I should break my poor mother's heart, and bring my father's brown wig in sorrow to the grave. My sisters, I am sure, loved me as tenderly as starch could love a brother. Poor souls! How they did cry when they felt thoroughly convinced that I should come to some disgraceful end, because, in a moment of enthusiasm, I said, "By jingo!" The loose exclamation, "Blow me tight!" has swept them from my presence like a whirlwind; and if I could but have listened when fast asleep, I should have heard them sobbing in concert, or performing a sort of triangular sigh, until two in the morning. Oh, yes, they were affectionate, but they were so infernally genteel.

Saying anything to please them, attached to me as they were, was impossible. Returning from a stroll over Wimbledon Common, I quoted the poet's well-known line, having

Whistled as I went for want of thought.

"Hush, my darling Charles," whispered Susanna; "oh never do such a thing; whistling is so very low."

Then, I suppose, want of thought is gentility itself.

But although affectionate to me, I cannot say that they overflow with tenderness for others. Their notions of elegance always stand so confoundedly in the way of their ideas; emotion, strong sympathy would take the starch out of them too liberally; it would discompose them altogether, meads, braids, ringlets, feelings, and worked collars. The story of your poor grandfather perishing in boiling lead, would only elicit from them a quiet and rather plaintive "indeed!" and if you were to tell them that your dear little infant had sprung out of its nurse's arms into the crater of Vesuvius, as she was just leaning over the edge to let it look down, they

would merely remark that such things were very distressing!

Over a nice book now, when alone, they would let out their feelings sometimes a little more, and I have known them to enjoy a good cry from sheer sympathy: when the heroine's lamp went out in the middle of a subterranean passage, or her lover, the proud young baronet, caught her in the act of pickling onions, or anything of that sort. But generally they read only tales of fashionable life, with the addition of "Sir Charles Grandison," which they go—through! regularly once a-year. How they would relish the reading, if such things were to be got at out of the British Museum, of those letters which Richardson received from his genteel correspondents, abusing Tom Jones! I 'm monstrously fond of "Tom Jones," you must know. Haven't I caught it, neither, for reading that too; and for saying bits from the "Beggar's Opera" about the house! Oh! that was high treason; so I used to hum some scraps over quietly when the carriages were going by, and the noise prevented me from being heard.

Now, you know, this was a kind of life which nobody could expect a lad of my spirit to bear, an hour after he had left boyhood behind him. What the deuce was it to me that I was the favourite and the darling of the whole family? More liberty and less love, say I. They were so fond of me that they must make a fool of me. They took such care of me, that they must insist on my being miserable. I was never brought up to any profession. Trade was of course so entirely out of the question, that it never obtained the honour of a thought; and Macgregor would sooner have seen his sons turned into weavers, than my father would have seen me a citizen and scale-maker. Some genteel professions wanted money which he had not, and others wanted

qualities which I had not; and so, as his prevailing characteristics were, procrastination and a polite and gentlemanly reliance on the decrees of fortune, I was brought up to be nothing, on the chance of somebody, at some time or other, purchasing for me a commission in the guards. I wish I may get ——; but the phrase is interdicted; low, very low.

Accordingly, I have at last bolted, as I felt I must do ever since yesterday morning, when I laughed at their refined repugnance to "the east," and also at pretty Lu Farmer's bewilderment. As the day advanced, matters became worse. They wanted to make a call, couldn't walk, and were evidently begrudging the expense of a "fly," having already exceeded the small weekly allowance.

"Why can't you get into the omnibus?" inquired I.

If you had seen the looks they darted at me! They flung the window wide open in December, as if I had proposed them to get into an oven.

To-day (Christmas-day) the water has risen to boiling heat. There was a very small, very select party assembled. My sisters sat like the three graces; but in buckram as usual. Now, let anybody who never lived in —— street, near the square, imagine a *genteel* Christmas-party. Fancy, if you can, what it is to spend your Christmas *genteelly*. Never was there anything so dreary. Why, if I had barely mentioned the *word* "mistletoe," I suppose salvolatile would have been in requisition all round the room. I wonder they didn't revive the snapdragon with which, when I was quite young, they celebrated our Christmas; when we were called up to the flaming fun, in regular order, one after the other, and were permitted to draw forth a single raisin quietly, when we went and sat down again till the summons, "Now, Charles, dear," was issued again.

I do think the proceedings to-day were duller still. To have got any fun out of the most frolicsome of the set, would have been like trying to romp in a strait-waistcoat. After a genteel silence of twenty minutes, a middle-aged young lady, who sat next to me, looking at the portrait of an old gentleman in half-armour that hung over the chimney-piece, ventured to surmise that it was an ancestor of ours, "of course." Now, "of course" it was hung there to create that very impression; and I knew it was expected by my family that my answer would be, as usual, "it is so *surmised;* but tired of the dead calm, I thought I would give it a little shock by letting out the truth; that it was just as likely to be the portrait of an ancestor of the lady herself, having been picked up at a sale for five-and-twenty shillings not long ago; adding, "A nice bit of painting of the kind it is; if it wasn't for the armour, we might pass it off for Grandfather Judd, who was boatswain to Boscawen, or some worthy of bygone days. I don't know which, but I know this was his backy-box." Taking at the same time from my pocket and old-fashioned affair, in which I treasure a scrap of 'cnaster for sly occasions.

The sensation this produced could hardly have been greater, if I had drawn out a live badger. Seeing Henrietta's head droop, and fearing she might be "going off," I instantly returned the precious family relic to my pocket, instead of handing it round for inspection; and starting a subject quite unexceptionable, not very ill-timed on a Christmas-night, inquired of the prim lady in middle-life, if she was not *very* fond of dancing; relating to her a curious incident which occurred last winter at the Opera (this was a subject which I thought at least would suit), where one foggy night the house became filled with so dense a vapour,

that the audience could hardly see the stage, and one of the dancers threw her legs about so high, that at length she got her feet stuck fast in the fog!

Like young Marlow, I was in for a list of blunders. This story was worse than all. The ladies rose *en masse;* that is to say, the whole seven of them, in resentment of an unparalleled outrage on the refinements and gentilities of society; then as they all crowded with exclamations of distress round Henrietta, poor thing! I caught the indignant stare of my sire, looking like that animal from which, as Shakspeare informs us, no milk is to be expected. I saw that it was all over with me, that my trial of gentility was passed, that I stood condemned without benefit of Christmas; and as my father, quitting the room, motioned me to follow him, to hear a two hours' lecture on a Christmas night, I did follow him, as far as the outside of the door. Then as he went up stairs, I went down; and in two minutes I was upon the wide world, riding in an omnibus, free as air—or fog, as we should rather say in this country. And now there's my story without a word of garnish.

I know they'll advertise for their darling immediately; and the notice will run, "If C——, &c. who left his home, &c. will return, &c., an arrangement will be made with his disconsolate sisters, by which he will be enabled to smoke three times a week in the back area." But as they will be sure to send the advertisement only to the more fashionable prints, it is not very likely that I shall ever see it; and if I should, the proposal will be in vain. No; having just glanced at the heads of my story, I here renew the offer with which I started. Any judicious pair, well to-do, and without male incumbrances, will find me worthy their attention, warranted town-made, and with a capital stock of filial affection on hand.

As I said before, I'm not particular. There's a touch

perhaps of my grandfather, the old boatswain, about me; and I shouldn't at all object to an offer from Rotherhithe, or some such district as that. I should prefer such a locality to the grand squares, and the genteel streets that run out of them. I 'm not at all nice or expensive in my tastes; don't care much about wine; a glass or two of sherry would be enough. I could manage a cut of corned-beef, or some such thing, at breakfast; shouldn't mind an early dinner, if preferred by the family; a few cigars I must stipulate for, and perhaps a glass of whiskey-punch with the old boy when he didn't care for the Sherry. I think there 's nothing unreasonable in all this. And it 's a settled thing that I should keep nobody sitting up for me at night; I hate giving servants that trouble, it disarranges all their doings the next day; no, I should always take the key! Now, I do think that 's accommodating. But I should stop at home some evenings, of course, for I like putting my feet on the fender of a winter-night, with a quiet cigar, and a sip now and then, or a rubber with the old people, if they have set their hearts on it. I 'm quite agreeable. And be it understood beforehand, that I make no conditions, no absolute conditions, about a snug corner in the will. I leave that to time. They may cut me off with a mourning-ring, and I won't be offended. Let it be Liberty-hall on both sides, that 's fair.

I write this from the Pewter-Platter, in Cripplegate, where, out of the way of the gentilities, I am finishing my Christmas evening, solitary, but not feeling alone, over a moderate measure of toddy. I shall have something left out of my seven-and-sixpence in the morning; when, if I could only get hold of plump little Lucy Farmer, I 'd take her to see the Thames-Tunnel, although it 's "so far east!"

"ALL SORTS OF LITTLE ATTENTIONS."

MANAGER (*at rehearsal*).—Now, Mr. Wewitzer, I wish you would pay a little attention.

WEWITZER.—So I do, sir, as little as I can.

JOE MILLER.

MAN is a *streaky* animal; fat vices and lean virtues.

One of our very leanest takes the shape of an anxiety to humour people's whims, and feed their vanity, and gratify that spirit of exaction which, when it once begins, never knows where to stop, by paying them all sorts of little attentions.

It may be said that social life is made up of them; that the exercise of the affections, the sympathies, the courtesies, is but the continual rendering of all sorts of little attentions. True; and animal life is but so many puffs of breath, as ocean is but so many drops of water, and the national debt so many half-farthings.

To set up as professor of the charities and affections by practising only the little attentions, is like paying off the debt a small coin or two at a time.

We are not to include in the catalogue of those who exact the little attentions, persons who are borne down by age and its infirmities. Here they are essential, and to be rendered with alacrity. The weak man feels the tide of life ebbing away, he begins almost to count the drops, and he requires hour by hour some token of kindness, some manifestation of sympathy, some proof that he is yet lingering among his kind, and not already the worm's perquisite ere the coffin comes. His potations of brandy have subsided into thin, weak draughts, and he wants a relish to them. He has need of some good soul to remind him feelingly that it is time to take

his gruel. The thought for him thus shown sweetens the tasteless cup. Small attentions are all that he is now capable of receiving. The hand that would aid his tottering steps must be very gentle; a strong service would overthrow what it intended to sustain.

But the not less common infirmities of disposition and temper are very different matters. We speak of persons who, with all their brisk, vigorous, and conscious faculties upon them, imperatively demand that the faculties of others shall be perpetually racked to provide petty pleasures for them. Whosoever would possess the privilege of their friendship, their good-will, their acquaintance, must be content to pay tribute; but that is not the worst of it; they must be content to be always at hand, and ready to pay, every minute, a small instalment of the full daily amount. The tribute is as nothing, compared with the mode of paying it.

There is no compounding with them by offering a huge service down, at a great personal sacrifice, in lieu of the little attentions. They are too independent to incur a large obligation. They simply require of you what seems to cost you nothing—all sorts of little attentions. In vain would you cut off a pound of your flesh to oblige them; they merely desire to have it, just the "fiftieth part of one poor scruple" at a time; and you insult them by proposing to strip your breast, all at once, of a full pound avoirdupois.

The most restless, arbitrary, and irritating of all duns are, proverbially, those whose accounts are despicably small. If the sum be hardly worth asking for, be sure that the creditor is terribly active and cruelly in earnest. The man who owes a good five thousand pounds is respectfully asked for it perhaps once in the year; but the forlorn wight who is indebted in the lawful sum of five shillings, is worried for it before he is up, and after

he has gone to bed; as he goes out, and as he comes home; he is hunted from the first-floor to the garret, and from the garret to the attic-window of the next house: until, perchance, the persecuted debtor is driven to the desperate expedient of borrowing the five shillings, and spending it at the public-house to comfort himself.

So with the debts of affection, of charity, and of courtesy, which we all owe one to another. Those who have the heaviest claims upon us are slowest to assert them. If we owe to one a good round turn, he does not go on persecuting us till we have accomplished it; the man whose friendship would be but poorly requited by the sacrifice of our right hand, never once asks us to cut it off. But those to whom we are indebted only in the most trifling amounts, are duns the most indefatigable. The beggarly amount must not be a minute overdue. Morality certainly requires a new Society for the Relief of Small Debtors.

Why did the amiable Fanny A., after an eternal constancy of six months, discard her devoted adorer, "the wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best" of dragoon captains? No, not the discreetest, either. He was discarded because, although he had travelled a good hundred miles for the sole purpose of escorting her to a ball, he never once thought of getting her an ice until three minutes after she had secretly felt a desire for one; and she might have remained uniced (except about the heart) for three minutes longer, had she not resolutely demanded strawberry or cream, by remarking with great moral courage,

"It's rather warm!"

Why did the sensible open-hearted Mr. B. forget to insert his nephew's name in his will, but because his nephew, lighting an Havannah, and tossing the cigar-case upon the table upon the help-yourself principle,

omitted the verbal invitation, "Won't you try one?" Because too, when he arrived late at night in town, he went direct to an inn, instead of knocking the family out of their beds to inquire after their health, of which he had heard the day before. And because, when he had presided over the cod-fish at dinner, to the satisfaction of the guests, he left not an atom of the sound for his aunt, and not a vestige of the liver for his uncle.

Why does the pretty, frank-minded Mrs. C. complain (in all the confidential circles of society) of being wedded to a rough-mannered, harsh, unaffectionate man? Because her husband is seldom in readiness to hold her pet pup for five minutes while she rummages for her scents? Because he never pays her the compliment of asking her to accompany him to some place, whither, he knows, for some approved reason, she will decline going. Because, when he is totally ignorant of the merits, whether as respects make or material, of the new bonnet, he positively refuses, from that simple cause, to give any opinion. And because, when she has twice remarked, "How very fine the morning is," he still sits reading on as though he did not hear her; she rises with hurt feelings, and an offended yet forgiving air, saying,

"Well, I did think you would have asked me to take an airing!"

He then drops his book, and tells her that if he had only known she wished it, he would have proposed it with pleasure.

"But it is not now too late?"

Oh, yes it is.

"She could have no enjoyment in the gayest drive, the pleasantest walk, if it were not his choice, his proposal."

But he does not propose; there is nothing affectionate, nothing *attentive*, in his disposition.

Why does the philosopher D. rail at all womankind, as born fools who have no passion but for finery, and no ear but for fops? Simply because, while he was discoursing one night in a gay assembly upon the doctrine of Abstract Ideas, the lovely lady who sat next to him, permitted those sparkling sinners, her eyes, to rest for a few seconds admiringly on her new bracelet, and then gave up her little ears for several minutes to the fine manly voice of a handsome young singer pleading at the piano for her soul's pity, with

"Love in her eyes sits playing."

And why did the great poet E., after having condescended to take up his abode for eight long months at Milk-and-Honey Hall, indulge himself by writing a libel upon its hospitable owner? Because, by some extraordinary omission, when he was at last taking his departure, he was not entreated to prolong his visit.

"It was not that I wanted to stop, or would have stopped," he exclaimed: "but you know one expects these little attentions."

Why does Lady F. sneer at her friend the baronet as an underbred person, a creature with none but the lowest ideas, and one who borrows his cook from the Freemasons'-tavern? Because on a certain occasion he omitted to lead her ladyship down to dinner, and having first asked Lady G. what *she* thought of the new ballet, insolently addressed, in the second place, the same silly question to her! The man, as she protests, is incapable of paying proper attentions.

And why does good Mrs. H. treat poor J., her husband's particular intimate with such marked coldness, endeavouring to exclude him from the family-board

where he has ever been welcomed, and denouncing him as a monster without a heart, who would heave no sigh if they were all in their graves to-morrow? Because, as she declares, he chose, at that dreadful period when they all had the scarletina, to be out of town, sent no letter, came again on their recovery, and patted the children on the head, but without making a single inquiry into the particulars of their alarming illness, and even turning away, as she was beginning to expatiate upon the subject to a perfect stranger, to listen to some stupid details about the last tragedy, or the new tariff.

Why is K., the infallible prophet, so confident in his prediction that such-and-such a theatre will go to ruin, and how is it that he dilates with pleasure upon the certainty of its failure? It is because he did not succeed in securing a private box for his family, gratis, on a particular evening. He likes little attentions.

What is the secret of L.'s present opinion of M.'s genius, of its palpable decline, of the pitiable wreck of his mind, as manifested in his last new romance, which the rest of the world considers to be his masterpiece? The critic did not receive a presentation copy of the work until it had been published three weeks, and then he found that a rival's name had been complimentarily quoted at the head of one of the chapters, with no mention of his own.

"I have read every line that man has written," is his complaint, "I have spent many happy nights and days feasting upon the compositions he has sent me, but I observe he rarely pays me any little attentions in return!"

Why, moreover, does the plain-faced, plain-mannered merchant N., keep his veteran clerk, poor old O., at such constant drudgery, on such niggardly pay, while

the youngsters around him get sly, presents, good-humoured pinches of the ear, and hints of pensions to come? Because, long years since, on first entering into his service, O. happened to take the plain man at his word. Squeezing himself respectfully into a corner to let the merchant pass, offering at the same time to take his wet umbrella and to hang up his hat, the little attentions of the clerk were rebuked.

"Never mind me," said the plain man, "don't waste time in compliment."

And from that time O. stuck to his business. He never dropped his busy pen to put a stray pair of gloves of his master's into the right-hand pocket of the great-coat, or to set out a dripping umbrella that it might be in readiness at four. He never jumped from his high stool to open the counting-house door for the plain merchant, nor sprang after him to the step of his gig to hand the brown-paper parcel, running back to the inner room to see whether the clear-sighted man had not left his spectacles. He never deserted his duty for an instant to peep needlessly at his master's fire on a raw day, or to snuff his candles on a dark one, or to hang his damp gaiters on the fender, or to shut the door when he had the rheumatism, or to move a packet of goods which was *not* in his way, or to volunteer the information that his watch was a minute too fast by St. Paul's. He fulfilled the injunctions of the plain man, and never paid him any little attentions. He only paid attention to the plain man's business.

But poor O. made a great mistake when he took his master at his word. The plain, proud merchant N. did not at all relish the omission of the flattering personalities. Secretly, he never begrudged the time lost to business in the act of lifting his hat, and making a respectful bow, and squeezing into a corner to make

way for the hereditary lord of many ledgers. The great passion of his heart was a love of the little attentions. He never understood an act of high devotion, and he was the better able, not indeed to comprehend, but to feel the convenience of the low servilities.

The plain man never liked anybody the better, but everybody the worse, for assenting to his own proposition, and recognising his plainness. He would allow nobody to treat him with profound deference and respect, without a protest against the vanity of such customs, and the ruinous waste of time spent in empty compliments; but he never forgave any one who hesitated to fly in the teeth of his injunctions, and pay court to him against his will. He demanded, first, that you should give him credit for sincerity, and then he required that you should act as if he were insincere. All sorts of little attentions he must have, together with a reputation for despising them.

And wherefore do P., Q., and R., play in some shape or other the same small game? Generally because the little, in every sense, best suits their natures. It is because they mistrust themselves that they would mislead others; because they doubt the strength of their more permanent claims to respect, and feel that they must snatch at any tokens of estimation, any triumphs of self-importance, which occasion may offer. Like beggars, they must not be choosers, but take what they can get. Theirs is the excitement which the actor craves; the time must bring with it its own zest. It is not the applause of the general public, still less that of posterity, least of all, perhaps, that which their own matured and self-satisfying judgment would most approve; it is not this that they take the trouble to seek, but simply the applause of the scanty audience around them, the false fleeting tribute of a few barren spec-

tators. They never feel sure, scarcely can they believe, that their position and character are recognised, unless they can elicit these audible and visible signs of their influence. Seldom are men so little as when they live only for little attentions.

But what are those who pay the tribute? Insignificant enough; yet the slave is sometimes more respectable than the tyrant.

There are among them tolerably harmless fellows. These are the Mr. Fiddle-faddles of this world. They always make what are called excellent husbands, pattern Benedicts; that is, they call their wives "My dear," and fly to help them on with their shawls. When the lady merely glances across the room, they whisper "can I get you anything, love?" and they create in her ten thousand whims, by tenderly imagining as many interesting wants for her. They are always planning some little surprises, to please, as they say, but in reality to spoil her; and as often as she has a headache from over-indulgence, they are heart-broken.

Then there are the bachelor Fiddle-faddles, who pass their evenings at the elbows of singing ladies, turning the music page over just at the right time; who are always ready to set the candles right for any one who is looking over engravings; and who never saw a cup of coffee in their lives that they did not wish to offer it to somebody.

"Say what you will," their maxim runs, "people like these little attentions."

They are generally happy in the good fortune of having procured a sixpenny view of Dorchester, to give to somebody who has lately been there; and they have always ready for use a rather unhackneyed passage from Moore to copy into the album of some charming woman who happened curiously enough to say she

admired him. Of course they are so attentive as to remember that little miss had a shocking cough, and they are lucky enough to have a new and improved lozenge, which they beg to be permitted to administer; and when it has almost choked the child, mamma cries,

"How very attentive!"

They have a penknife in the waistcoat-pocket, which is promptly drawn forth, and very much at the service of the gentleman who is writing; and probably they have some such abomination as a cigar-holder to proffer, most obligingly, to the astounded and disdainful smoker. Not that they are always so discriminating as to proffer their service where there is an apparent chance of its being acceptable; for in the absence of the right article, rather than not pay any attentions at all, they would offer the cigar-holder to the gentleman who needs a penknife. Most likely they carry a silver pen, which, when they have prevailed upon some victim to use it, splashes the paper all over, or cuts its way to the next sheet.

One of the many varieties of human kind addicted to the practice of the small-attentions, comes in the likeness of a young lady (turned twenty-one), who, having had no "offer" hitherto, thinks it time to acquire a reputation for being extremely agreeable and obliging, with the character of one who would make the "best wife in the world." What pains she will take to please everybody around her! What an amiable, polite, smiling slavery is hers! What multitudes of pretty trifles which you don't want will she make you a present of! What hourly inconvenience will she occasion you, by setting your writing-table in order, and stowing away your books, and arranging with success your familiar disarrangements. Beseech her not to trouble herself; she will work twice as hard, and do double damage.

Employ whom you will upon any little errand about the house, and she will snatch the commission out of their hands. She *must* be *so* obliging. Let us pray that this will not, in regular process, lapse into downright sycophancy and toadyism;—for the sake of the ill-fated young gentleman of nineteen, who, innocently admiring the unwearied amiability, offers her one or two little attentions in return; which, being regarded upon her part as an explicit declaration, involve upon him the immediate forfeiture of his hand. The little attentions here indicated are, with all the dangers attending them, so well understood, as to require no description.

But all this is mere idleness and comparatively innocent folly. It is sometimes a little intrusive and presumptuous, but while we laugh we can pardon. It at least indicates a desire to please; and gives promise, perhaps, that the professor of small attentions would really do somebody a positive kindness now and then, if he knew how to set about it. It is less hurtful to others than to himself, whose energies both of heart and mind it saps, with a fearful and a sure rapidity; until whatever is redeeming in his busy concern about insignificancies—the wish to diffuse pleasure—becomes a mere silly habit without a motive; the mechanical trick loses its grace, the emptiness of the over-acted courtesy is seen: and the truth comes out, that life has been absurdly trifled away, in vain and restless impotence, as though it were but wreaths of vapour.

"The worst remains behind." It is when this idle habit of offering to all sorts of people "all sorts of little attentions," degenerates into that, to which it at least indirectly leads, the practice of the deliberate and conscious Parasite: that "fawning Parasite" whose image, although seen in miniature daily without a shudder,

impresses itself upon the imagination as the most supple, crawling, and repulsive of all shapes known to it. Exhaust the catalogue of crimes recognised by the law; track the fiery and desolating course of the vilest passions; and then judge them, without the slightest extenuation on the score of tempted human weakness, by the havoc they have made, the ruin they have effected; and still there is one crime, one propensity remaining, that looks blackest and most loathsome of all.

The "fawning parasite" is a picture, which, in consummate and ineffable meanness, in the degradation that has nothing of the redeeming in it even by association, places human nature at the worst. We know, by that sign, the most servile and sickening form that unmanliness can take. We know that the last stage of the despicable, the utmost bitterness of honest disdain, has been attained, when we behold in that abject thing our own likeness. We can wander no further from the uprightness and the sincerity which are the two wings of the world, wafting it heavenward. We have found the lowest level when we have found out that.

A sign of the intolerable repulsiveness of this character is seen in the fact that it has never yet been fully drawn. Fearful glimpses of it we have had, but it has not been anywhere worked out as all wickedness beside has been. Men can bear to paint and contemplate the other vices to which they are liable; but the depravity here is too horribly mean and unsightly; they have thrown a veil over it by common consent. Villany of all degrees is tolerated upon the stage, and viewed with curiosity; the spectacle raises various feelings of sympathy or disgust, but it is beheld patiently, and seen to an end. The delineation of the Parasite,

at full length, would be hooted off the boards; it could not be endured for half an hour.

Let nothing we have herein said relating to those many "little attentions" which, insincerely offered, although not traceable to a deliberate and detestable deceit — prompted only by a spirit of officiousness or vanity — still lead on indirectly to this dark and ruinous abyss; let nothing "herein contained" be misconstrued into a contempt for those trivial causes from which great events proverbially spring. When Cæsar muffled up his face, death looking out of it, as he fell at the base of Pompey's statue, the action seemed trivial; and yet how grand it is, and with what dignity it invests the fall of the conqueror. When Nelson, while the engagement was yet raging, rejected the proffered wafer, and waited, though in hot haste, for wax to seal the letter, the point of distinction appears small, but how great the foresight, and how incalculable the consequences associable with it. So in a hundred memorable instances. Assuredly there are "little attentions" which are of great importance.

TELLING ONE'S TROUBLES.

No man can hope to enjoy that annual happy new year, which his friends are so apt to "wish he may get" in a tone implying their conviction that he will get no such thing, unless he have done what in him lies to leave the troubles of the old year behind, and to start fair, free from encumbrances. What applies to years applies to months. The new account will never go lightly on if clogged with a heavy balance brought

forward. As time moves on with wallet at his back, let sorrows be the "alms" that he puts into it "for oblivion."

All very well, cries the world, but this is sooner said than done! The world, though a year older than it was a twelvemonth ago, is still wrong. In most cases it is *no* sooner said than done. Tell your trouble, and it is half over; continue talking about it, and it is not felt at all. He who keeps his sorrows to himself, *does* keep them. While they are secrets they are stingers. Silence is the twin-sister of Grief, and acts as nurse to her, but Gabble is her sworn enemy. While the tongue runs, it is twelve chances out of a dozen that the tears will not.

That man understands neither misery nor friendship, who does not communicate to his friends the woes that agitate him. He does not deserve to be wretched; to be human. He is, in fact, little better than a pillar of salt and a suit of clothes. We once heard an insipid but solemn personage whimsically compared to a "basin of gruel in a black cloak." He is even as incongruous as this.

How different from him who, as often as a new trouble turns up, takes out a list of his intimate relatives and acquaintances, and of each in succession makes a sole and especial confidant! whispering his affliction to every one of them as to the only friend he ever had in the wide world, and thus striking from the rock of at least threescore bosoms those streams of sympathy that take their rise from a point singularly near to the fountain of self-love; for if we can persuade ourselves that we are the one honest and generous being picked out to be confided in, the flattery of the preference generally reconciles us to the intrusion, and extracts something pleasant from the dolefulness of the duty

imposed. And how is this adoption of the social-system, in opposition to a selfish monopoly, rewarded? Why, by the time the communicative sufferer has confided in all his friends, and exhausted the entire list, he finds that he has exhausted his griefs too, having fairly written and talked himself into a comfortable independence of consolation.

It sometimes happens though, that to meditate these grievous communications is easier than to effect them. When we recommend the miserable to tell their troubles, we should perhaps advise them to catch their friends first. It is as well when you mean to take a man by the button, to be cautious how he gets hold of yours instead. There are mourners about town, whose hearts are so continually bursting with a sense of innumerable grievances; who have been so monstrously ill-used, and so undeservedly afflicted from their cradles, that they will allow nobody to relate a heart-rending story but themselves; theirs must be all the misery or none, there's no slipping in a sigh edgewise with them. It is desirable, with sufferers of this class, to dash at once into your agonizing narrative. Wave the ordinary salutations of acquaintanceship and the compliments of the season, and begin at once; "My heart's broken," &c., before they can sob out a syllable; or depend upon it they will get the start. And whosoever starts first in these cases, has the stage to himself throughout the tragedy.

Let it not be supposed, however, that there is no advantage in the attempt to transfer your sorrow to some sympathetic bosom, even though the attempt should be thus frustrated. Your lamentations may be stifled in their birth; you may be converted into a listener, a mere mute; but though stopped at the second word of your story, checked most abruptly, discouraged most

unceremoniously, is it no advantage, no relief to a racked and wounded bosom to find that the affectionate friends whom you came to consult and confide in, have sorrows to divulge of a depth and a keenness to which yours have no pretensions; troubles to which yours are trifles, affairs of broken toys; distresses incalculably less remediable; woes that have taken each bewailing voice three hours to recount, as you perceive by your own stop-watch, for by that you have been three hours a listener. So that in either case there is an advantage; "each way makes your gain." If uninterrupted in your recital of affliction, you lighten your grief by depositing it in the tender breasts of numerous friends; if cut short in your story, and obliged to listen, you equally lighten your grief by discovering that the tender breasts of numerous friends are torn and convulsed more curelessly than your own.

The fact of troubles being oftentimes completely talked away, and of people becoming suddenly light-hearted by simply unbosoming themselves, as it is called, is too well established to be further insisted upon; the practice is too generally adopted to require recommendation. But the efficacy of listening, as a remedy, is not quite so apparent. The principle of it, it will be perceived, is simply the principle of the homœopathic system carried out to its opposite extent; curing grief by taking unlimited doses of it. As a large quantity of the sympathetic medicine in the one case would be avowedly destructive, so a small quantity in the instance of the moral disease would be worse than useless. You must go the whole round of your intimate friends and visiting acquaintances; you must find a decided majority of them plunged in profound affliction, and relief must, in some particular cases of extreme intimacy and regard, be hopeless; before the heaviness of spirit with

which you heard the opening of the sad series of disclosures has a chance of being finally dissipated. You must go the whole hog, eat the entire animal that bit you, or there is no cure in store for you.

But all this will be better shown and explained by a short recital of some adventures that occurred the other day; a case in which our deeply-attached friend (Ego is his name), Mr. Ego, figures as the patient. Melancholy had, that morning, marked him for her own. The most angelic nature will sour. Nobody's perfect. A saint may be allowed once in his life to "indulge" (as the phrase is) in those specimens of the English tongue which are better expressed on paper by a——of a certain measurement, or an explanatory half-dozen of * * *. To make a plain confession, he was in what is domestically called a sweet temper. The cause in these cases is of the least possible consequence. In general the morose fit is all the sweeter for being wholly destitute of a cause. But suppose it to be an unlucky day, the Bad Friday of the whole year. The provocation begins perhaps, as soon as you are up, with a slip of the razor on the tender side of the chin; or when dressing in a hurry, a shirt-button comes off, or the boot hook breaks; we put it to any patient reasonable gentleman whether he knows of anything much more provoking, or better calculated to justify a towering passion. No matter then for the grievance; enough that it was a genuine one while it lasted. With a determined and irritable consciousness of the

> "One fatal remembrance, one sorrow that throws
> Its bleak shade alike o'er our joys and our woes,"

Ego strolled Strandward to Somerset House, where his Pylades regularly arrives every day at eleven o'clock;

and into that gentle, indulgent, deeply-compassionating breast he designed to pour his sorrows.

Pylades was punctual, and if he were ordered for execution he would be punctual; he wouldn't keep a sheriff waiting one minute in the cold. But something, notwithstanding, had caused a slight deviation from his usual habits; for though, as during the first official hour of every morning in the winter months, he was seated with his feet on the fender, with papers unexamined, and a letter or two unopened on his table, the well-dried morning newspaper was *not* in his hand. The omission was ominous. He couldn't "relish his murders."

"Ah! my dear friend," he said as Ego entered, "I didn't expect to see you to-day; very glad you've looked in—" and he sighed heavily; "do sit down. How are you?"

"Oh! don't ask me, I don't know when I've been so annoyed," was the reply, accompanied by a cordial pressure of the extended hand. "The fact is, I came down here on purpose to tell you, well knowing how distressed you will be on my account. And what a relief that is to one's feelings! An infernal circumstance has occurred that really gives me more trouble—"

"Trouble! my dear Ego, don't mention it. I'm sure I can feel for you. If *I* didn't, I don't know who should. Nobody can sympathise so well as those who suffer, eh? and I'm sure just now I'm suffering enough, quite enough. Now was *ever* anything so provoking, so unlucky! You haven't heard? No, of course you haven't; how should you! I've only just heard it myself; just now, since I came in. My dear friend, you'll be very sorry to learn that by an arrangement which took place yesterday, I've lost, finally lost, at

least three hundred and seventy pounds a year! Three hundred and seventy or seventy-*five* pounds per annum, gone with a dash of the pen. Irrecoverable! My dear fellow, I knew I should shock and hurt you excessively, and therefore I'm so glad you happened to drop in thus early. I meant to hunt you up in the evening of course, to let you know; for it is friendship's happy privilege to share all troubles with a friend, and you—"

"But what d'ye mean? How have you *lost* a sum which—"

"Which you justly consider to be no trifle! True; three hundred and seventy, or I may say seventy-five, for life; mind, irrecoverably gone. I was sure it would grieve you, careless and happy as you seemed when you entered."

"Careless and happy. Well; but never mind my troubles just now; tell me *how* you have lost this little estate for life? you who never go beyond sixpenny points?"

"Oh! how? That I dare say you'll learn by the morning paper, there; no doubt there's a paragraph, I haven't looked. The vacancy here, you know! old Simon Percontra died a month ago. That was a rise for *me*, a certain rise; it seemed mine, and it was mine, yet here I am in my old office, and here I am likely to remain. There was little or nothing to do in Simon's department, mere nominal duties, and so they have determined that the office is not wanted; utterly regardless of the very serious loss to me: just giving me perhaps a hundred and twenty-five pounds extra a year; by way, I suppose, of making the disappointment bitterer; just to remind me every quarter of my loss. Ah! my dear friend, it's a comfort to me, amidst all my disasters, that you are exempt, absolutely exempt, from the plagues and cares of this life. I never knew

so happy a fellow; but though you have no troubles, you can feel for one who has."

"Troubles! Why I tell you nothing but trouble brought me here, and I believe I'm the most miserable—"

"Ah! well you mustn't give way to a sympathy too generous, too acute; don't distress yourself on *my* account; forget it, as I mean to do as soon as I can; though let me tell you that three hundred and seventy or seventy-five pounds, cut off, per annum, finally lost; for life, mind!"

Long before the new chapter of lamentations was concluded, Ego was driven forth in quest of a listener, for not one drop of his flood of sorrow could he succeed in pouring into the preoccupied bosom of the agonized official.

What Pylades will not hear, Pythias may; and to Pythias, located westward, repaired Mr. Ego. The friend now sought is much younger than the first; grief at his years is less selfish and egotistical; besides he has no grief, and abundance of idleness; if your story were "The Broken Heart, in 2 vols.," his long ears would drink every syllable of it, and the narrative would proceed to an unmusical accompaniment of stifled sobs.

No sooner was Ego admitted into his friend's apartment, than, resolved not to throw away a chance, he commenced his sad narration; but then on the other hand, no sooner had he mentioned the words trouble, distress of mind, true friendship, &c., than looking up, he saw by the sorrowful face, the suffused eyes of his Pythias, that he was indeed in the house of mourning. He had taken the precaution to be sudden this time; to waive all prefatory hints and exclamations; to be beforehand with his friend; and in his anxiety to effect his purpose by an actual commencement, he had not

observed the ready-made affliction (if such a term may without levity be employed) of the bosom which he had come to agitate.

The sympathetic Pythias had evidently been weeping bitterly, ere a syllable was uttered; like those zealous critics, who, predetermined against the new farce, began to hiss furiously before the curtain drew up. Ego's look of surprise was instantly answered by a glance which his friend directed to two open letters lying upon the table, and exulting in particularly broad black margins.

"Take it," said Pythias, tossing one of the ostentatiously-mournful letters across, "you will see by that what I have lost. My poor old uncle; you had opportunities formerly of seeing how fond he was of me."

"The jovial old boy! and is he gone?" exclaimed Ego, with unaffected fervency; and then, respecting his young friend's grief, he relapsed into a silence of some minutes' duration.

At length, returning from the window to which he had retired to give the bereaved nephew an opportunity of recovering himself, Ego approached him, with the view of offering a few words of sympathy; of consolalation if possible; nay, even of gentle remonstrance; for the agitation of the young man was excessive, and it was necessary that he should put some control upon his emotions.

"I can't," he cried in reply to the friendly expostulation; "I feel as though I should never know peace and comfort again. I have been in this state for several hours; and as you see me now, you will see me years hence, if I live so long. My dear sir, you have never lost such an uncle under such circumstances. You cannot understand an affliction such as mine. Mine is the agony of a lifetime, not of a day." And he flung

himself, in what is called "abandonment," on a sofa.

Now, Ego had not only never lost, but he had never happened to possess, a particularly rich uncle who was particularly fond of him; the feelings of nephews, therefore, on occasions like the present, were indeed enigmas to him. He well knew the extreme sensitiveness of his young friend's nature, his ardent susceptibility, his uncorruptedness of heart; and he equally well knew what reason the nephew had to be unboundedly grateful to a relation whose sole heir he was. Still, with all allowances on the score of susceptibility and gratitude, the emotion painfully visible in the features and demeanour of the bereaved, did appear extravagant—extravagant and mysterious.

"No," exclaimed the mourner, starting from the sofa, and pacing the room from corner to corner, "pray do not bid me be composed. The veriest clod would be moved almost to madness by such a sudden, such an irreparable loss. So kind," stopping short and reflecting for an instant, like an experienced clerk, who counts up at a glance a long column of heavy sums and instantly ascertains the total, "so kind and liberal as he was to me!" And at the thought his eyes rolled in so distressing a manner that the idea of the applicability of a straight-waistcoat darted across the mind of the friendly and compassionate beholder.

"The remembrance of that kindness," urged Ego, after a pause, "will cheer you all through life; while the splendid fortune which you inherit, will enable you so to give effect to that jovial soul's generosity of——"

"Splendid fortune!—What do you mean? Oh, I see you've read the wrong letter. A splendid fortune!—a splendid shilling. You see, I'm cut off; I should

have mentioned that at first;—cut off! The jovial soul that you speak of has left it all to a four-bottle rascal, a drunken cousin of mine, who had impressed his mind with a full belief that I had joined the teetotalers, and so he swore that nobody should have his money that didn't know how to spend it: adding, that he begrudged me the shilling, lest I should spend it in water—cold without! And not a fault proved against me but one; that I wouldn't let him pay my wine-merchant's account last year; that I would make his allowance suffice—would discharge my own debts! So much for temperance, honesty, gratitude, and moderation! If ever I'm temperate, grateful, honest, or moderate again, may I ——!"

It must be plain that Mr. Ego had not the slightest chance that day of finding a listener in his duped and disconsolate friend. So, having thus discovered the cause of the extreme emotion he had witnessed, and pronounced it to be, like many other mysteries, very simple and very natural when explained, he departed, with his own pathetic tale yet untold.

"If the heart of a man be depressed with cares," he is very apt to wander, quite unconsciously, into the vicinity of something not ill-calculated to lighten it. And so it was with Mr. Ego, who strolled on until he found himself unexpectedly in the neighbourhood of Tavistock-square, and consequently within reach of the knocker of his tender-hearted—we had almost said of his tinder-hearted—friend, Mrs. Blossom.

"There are no such kind and pitying things as women, after all," said Ego, internally, as he lifted one of the pleasing bronze knockers that confer peculiar gentility on the door of Mrs. Blossom; "and of all women," he added, as he rang the bell, "there's not one that will listen to you so attentively as a widow."

We should here remark that Mrs. Blossom was a widow; and by way of supplying some description of her we may observe, that the door above alluded to being rather wide than lofty in its structure, was singularly well adapted to afford admission to the lady of the mansion. But the widow Blossom was a charming person nevertheless, and we do not scruple to say—had been more so. Only she was so very tender-hearted.

"Delightful!" exclaimed that lady, as she tripped lightly—for trip lightly she could—into the drawing-room, and took the hand of her visitor between both her own, which were sufficiently small, white, and plump, to prevent any gentleman from being in a violent hurry to escape from their pressure. "Delightful! This is so kind. I'm so glad you have dropped in; it is so very kind. But, dear, dear Mr. Ego, what *is* the matter? Why you look almost as melancholy as a married man!".

This was instantly followed by a short, fat, pleasant little laugh, which served as a running accompaniment to a declaration that she must have her wicked joke against marriage, though she protested it was a state of life into which she never once repented of having entered; and then her face assumed a look of most sad and anxious inquiry, like Liston's (only lovelier) when he used to make that touching appeal to a gentleman with something upon his mind, "If it's murder, mention it."

"Ah! my dear madam," said Mr. Ego, "I know I ought not to come to you to tell my troubles—"

"Ah! my dear friend," interrupted the widow Blossom, "I'm sure I've troubles that will match with the worst of yours. Talking of troubles, now—do sit down, and I'll tell you. I'm so charmed to have this opportunity, and I know you will sympathise. Those girls of mine,

only think, they are beginning to occasion me such extreme distress. There's Miss Harriet, little Harriet, your favourite; well, I know I shall surprise you; nothing on earth will now suit the girl, nothing but—I'm half-ashamed to tell you, positively—but falling in love; falling—in—love! Ah, you may well look grieved! Such a mere child, you know! you remember her being born. Why she was eighteen I think; or was it nineteen? only the other day, not a great while ago. Ridiculous, isn't it? but how dreadful! I'm so shocked to hear the child talk; to hear her tell me that *I* was both in love and in matrimony too, long before I was her age, as I certainly was; and very, very happily, I always lived, considering the violent temper of poor Augustus, and his infidelities. But then that's no rule, and I am sure I should never have thought of being married if my mamma had been in a state of widowhood. Besides, my dear friend, what makes this affair a thousand times more shocking is, that this gentleman, Ensign Atkins, one of the Shropshire Atkinses, is supposed, very erroneously and very absurdly, but generally supposed to have—to have *other* thoughts in visiting here; that is, that his addresses have another direction; not that I'm sure; but you must at once perceive how truly distressing is the whole affair—you can understand a mother's feelings," and the prettiest blush that had overspread the comely, round, fleshy features of the widow Blossom, was now succeeded by a sparkling and rather dangerous fire in the eye. "But of course I'm quite resolved," she continued, "to check this monstrously-premature passion, at once and for ever. If I utterly destroy the child's happiness it will be all for her own good. Don't you feel that I am right, and, unprotected as I am, that I must take this decided step? I'll lock her up for life—I will indeed. I see

now that you quite agree with me—it's so kind. Directly I saw you, your face said that you came to sympathise with me!" and the charming widow Blossom, maternal tenderness and grateful friendship struggling in her gentle heart together, burst into a very becoming and well-sustained shower of tears.

The tearful mood was as little favourable as the talking mood for the one purpose of the melancholy Mr. Ego's visit, which was to disburden his heart of its own sad freight. Accordingly he took upon himself, after a short interval, the task of consoling the forlorn widow, by pointing out the usual chances and prospects of relief in these cases, viz., that young ladies are very fickle, and that little Harriet was changeable from a child; that she was quite as likely to listen to the voice of reason as to the voice of love; that first love rarely made a match of it; that what appeared to be a dead shot of Cupid's might be nothing more than a flash in the pan; that a little absence and country air are an effectual cure in such cases; that the ensign might be ordered to join his regiment! This last suggestion was unfortunate, for the excited widow looked less pleased than ever, reproachful even; so that Mr. Ego, exhausted, saw no mode of condolence so practicable as an immediate plunge into the story of his own troubles.

"But, dearest Mrs. Blossom," he began, "let me entreat you to be calm, listen to me but for a few moments. Where should I seek a gentle listener, if not here? To whom should I appeal for sympathy, if not to you? The matter that is now weighing on my heart, dear Mrs. Blossom,—"

And Mr. Ego proceeded in a most earnest manner, and in tones mellifluously sad, to descant upon his secret woe, and his confidence in the tender-heartedness of his listener; who, on her part, reading in his eyes some-

thing very peculiar which she could not readily interpret, and hearing herself proclaimed as one to whom his soul yearned to disclose the source of his emotion, inclined her ear to hearken with such intentness and anxiety, that before he could possibly commence his dreary tale, Mr. Ego felt considerably disconcerted. He paused, and the pause begat fresh perplexity in the heaving bosom of the widow. What could those looks denote? What was he about to reveal? *Why* should he so suddenly pause? An idea, quick as the lightning, and it must be owned equally bright, flashed across her mind, and then a flush as suddenly crimsoned her face. Her eyes, which had drooped very prettily as the tones of her perturbed visitor ceased, were now momentarily raised, and that glance which met his, had almost overpowered her sensitive nature. She was now in visible confusion; she was not less agitated, but evidently from an opposite cause, than she had been but a few minutes before; and poor Ego exhibited by his extreme embarrassment a full consciousness of all the difficulties that beset a gentleman who is misunderstood by a widow of exquisite sensibility.

His deep-seated sorrow, which he had called expressly to talk about, had now become unutterable, and he sat for a few moments longer, looking things that could only be described by the same epithet. But of course he felt that this absurd perplexity must be terminated at once by a desperate effort at explanation; and accordingly, having contrived to force his lips completely apart, he essayed, but in the most nervous tones, to articulate, "Ah, dearest madam, if you knew how natural it is for me, long as we have known and deeply as we have esteemed each other, to disclose to you in confidence all that I feel here—" but here he stopped; for in the necessary illustration of his text he had

placed his hand somewhere in the immediate neighbourhood of the left-hand pocket of his waistcoat, a locality towards which the timid but very tender eye of the widow Blossom was as though instinctively directed; and this significant glance was no sooner observed by him, than his embarrassment was increased tenfold. He almost felt that he had better at once tell her in plain terms, she was entirely mistaken. But could he? Could he even tell her now what he came to tell her, and disappoint her cruelly? In his confusion he took her hand, which trembled as he touched it, and this made matters worse; he instantly dropped it, and apologised, and this made matters worse still. Not knowing what else in the world to do, there is every reason to apprehend that Mr. Ego would have felt absolutely obliged to extricate himself from his exceedingly delicate situation, by stammering out the expected announcement, and professing a boundless and unalterable passion; had not the startled widow herself relieved him, by a slight scream which issued from her lips, and supplied him with a pretext for instantly springing from his chair.

"It's that Kitty, I heard her on the stairs," exclaimed Mrs. Blossom, in a voice hurried and agitated; and as the door of the drawing-room flew open, and Kitty sprang into the room like a young bird, whisking at the same time a little china ornament from a table which she passed, her mother fixing her fond eyes, brimful of tears, on Mr. Ego's face, cried out in tones which the timely crash behind shut from all ears but his, "Was ever widow left with such irritating, such unfeeling children!"

Which way he turned, when he quitted the mansion of the provoked widow Blossom, Mr. Ego by no means knew or cared. He was alive only to the one fact—that to the annoyance with which he had left home

that morning, he had now one or two superadded; and as he walked on, he began to consider that it was rather odd that he should happen to find friend after friend in a tragic mood; all wailing and gnashing their teeth, so that not a word of his own story could he tell. But by this time he had travelled within a stone's-throw of Gray's Inn.

"Furnival's is not far off," said Ego the wanderer, "and I'll call on Tom Middleton. His three dismal octavos have been made to look so brilliant in the reviews, and he has been written into so much more renown than he could ever hope to be read into, that he must be in a happy mood; and Tom's a kind fellow. I'll tell *him* my grievance."

Tom was at home; but the "come in" which tardily followed the tap at the inner door of his chambers, had a gloomy, harsh, and ill-boding sound. If that "come in" did not come gratingly through the closed teeth of the gentleman-author within—but we won't anticipate.

Tom was in an easy-chair, but evidently on thorns; in a cozy position before the fire, but there was a manifest chill in his looks. He put out his hand languidly, and without rising, said simply, "Sit down."

The intruder was too much absorbed in his sorrow to see that he was an intruder; and bent on dividing his woes with a friend he loved, he began at once to explain.

"Don't fancy, my dear Tom, that I come this time in the character of a congratulator; to bring you more delightful notices of your book, more critical tributes to your genius. Quite different; I'm here in the dismals. In faith, my dear fellow, I'm really concerned to say—"

"Oh! I know that," said Tom, sharply; "I was sure of that. I knew you must be concerned, much concerned; I could see that by your face, if I had needed such information."

"Then you've heard, have you?" exclaimed Ego, with some surprise; and drawing his chair nearer, at the same time taking the hand of his friend with a grateful impulse, he added, "Dear Tom, I'm sure you felt it bitterly, bitterly."

"Heard of it?" returned the author, in a sarcastic tone that was quite inexplicable; "heard of it? Oh, yes, I've *heard* of it. Felt it, you say! yes, and I've felt it too; bitterly, if that affords you any satisfaction. Heard! oh, my good friend, one is sure to hear of these things rather promptly, and from many quarters. You're late with the news; six good-natured friends have been here before you."

"Astonishing! how *did* they hear of it?"

"They have read it," replied Mr. Middleton, in a tone so calm and polite that it was impossible to detect the bitterness and exasperation that prompted it.

"Read! There must be some mistake—"

"Oh, no," rejoined the author with asperity; "there's no mistake; you see, I have it here; the pages are cut, and I've read it through, all through. But perhaps you've not! No? oh, pray take it; here; do read it, read; you'll enjoy it excessively; I should like to know what dear, kind friend of mine will *not!* Oh, pray read!"

Ego, considerably bewildered, and wondering when he *should* find a chance of unfolding his own lamentable tale, glanced at the just-published review which was presented to him, and there, Art. IV., detected the grievance. An attack; one of those articles which serve to show that no author can write in vain if he provokes fine criticism. And how many noble articles have been written upon bad books! The bark of some trees is more valuable than the wood it encloses.

"And in this publication!" said Ego with astonishment: "why I thought you expected—"

"To be sure I did, exactly the reverse. This was the only work on which I relied for a friendly—that is, for justice; for a highly eulogistic notice. Now *all* the others, as you know, though I never had the slightest interest with them in any way, have lauded me to the skies; nothing can be fairer than the mode in which I have been treated by *all* the others. But here, where I really had a dependence! And what do you think; two articles sent, and the wrong one gone in by accident! Pleasant, isn't it? Flogged by mistake! But I regard it, as you may suppose, with perfect indifference; only I can't help noticing how wretchedly it is done; for if he had only read—now, just see here—"

And what with protesting against any inference that he (Mr. Middleton) could possibly care one straw about such an attack, and pointing out proofs positive that the critic could not have read because he censured, the day rolled on without affording to his disconsolate friend the shadow of a chance of interposing a single sentence on his own account. The instant he articulated the word "anxiety," or referred to the state of his nerves; he was most feelingly interrupted; assured that the whole thing was far too ridiculous to cause any anxiety; or to affect anybody's nerves; and finally invited to witness a spectacle of heroic and virtuous suffering, with a "See how *I* bear it!"

"If it's trouble, my dear boy," cried Colonel Click (on whom Ego next called), "I shall listen to you with the greatest pleasure, and you shall have my condolences with all the gratification in life; but you must give me time; just now, had I three ears I could not hear thee. At seven o'clock I'm engaged to act as friend in an honourable affair four miles off; and, in the mean time, I must be at the Freemasons' before the meeting breaks up, and do an hour's committee-work in the matter of

the musical festival. Then in the morning, if we all come off shot-free to night, I've an affair of my own to settle before breakfast, some distance off, in another direction; and, leaving Brodie out of the question, these things take up time; but I must be with the directors before twelve, and at two there's a deputation—"

"Oh, enough, quite enough, my dear colonel," cried Ego, "I'll call in about three weeks."

We need not follow Mr. Ego step by step in his wanderings about town that day, or knock with him at every friendly door he could think of; now in the suburbs, now in the heart of the city, and now in the courtlier regions. It is enough that he did knock at many such doors, paid a whole round of visits, found somebody at home everywhere, and verified by the result the truth of the saying, that every house has its hatchment.

In one place he found a friend boiling over with the most unlistening rage, because his banker had just refused payment of his cheque, on the mere ground that there were no assets; in another, he pounced upon a man of genius whose *libretto* had been returned to him as "deficient in poetry" by seven musical composers in succession—a curiosity of literature. At one house, his knock had occasioned some consternation, inasmuch as the inmate, who had a hard-hearted creditor, was apprehensive that he had committed an act of bankruptcy; and at another, the eldest daughter had that morning eloped with various valuables and a junior clerk. Here lived a friend who had in an unguarded moment made an offer of his hand, and been rejected, positively rejected; and there lived a friend more woe-begone still, who had, in an unguarded moment, experienced the acceptance of his hand by a divinity whom he was now particularly anxious to be parted from. In

every case was sympathy exacted from him; in none had he a chance of obtaining it. Each had a woful story to tell, and each related it without the hypocrisy and the unfriendliness of abridgment! But his tale was a tale of mystery to the end. Not one listener could he find; not one, who, upon his note of complaint, did not stop him with, "Ah! if you only knew! sit down, and I'll tell you." His brow was the title-page to *their* tragic volume; and at half-past six in the evening, his narration was a book sealed still.

At seven, however, when Mr. Ego arrived at home and sat down to dinner, an unaccountable, but very comfortable, glow came over his feelings. Instead of finding his spirits depressed, by the want of sympathy he had experienced, and the sad tidings he had everywhere heard, he found them raised to a pitch of cheerfulness that bordered upon hilarity. He hadn't felt so light-hearted and happy a long while. He relished everything he tasted, and in a single glass of champagne could drown every care that he had in life. But his grief, his bitter and biting trouble of the morning, where was that? He couldn't have told for the soul of him. He had dissipated it somehow in his day's excursion in quest of sympathy. He had left it behind him somewhere. He had found no listener, but he had lost the story he meant to tell.

"Talking your griefs down, is one safe plan," said he, "but listening them away is another. Deuced odd! I've encountered blue devils at every turn, and instead of bringing any away with me, presto! they've captured mine. Wilkins!"

"Sir."

"Which pantomime was it I saw last week?"

"Drury-lane, sir."

"Cab to Covent-garden."

YOUNG ENGLAND.

"Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child?"—*Childe Harold.*
"The werry moral."—SMITH *on Portrait Painting.*

OF Young Germany we are heartily weary, and with Young France we are horribly stunned. Of the one we have had quite enough, of the other a little too much.

Let the first of these juveniles continue to wrap himself sublimely and mysteriously in alternate revelry and devilry, and find reason, as well as rhyme, in thinking deep and drinking deep. Let the second still rail and rattle on, equally in his own way; gnashing his teeth while he hums an opera air, profoundly bowing where he longs for a bayonet charge, and eating his own heart in sheer excitement as he fattens upon his frogs.

All the young blood of the earth belongs not to them. Why, there is Young Italy, in whose sunny veins the blood has been of late fermenting; and Young Greece, a really gallant and emulous little fellow, who, all of a sudden, only the other day, despising the aid of Mars, and in contempt of Mercury (by whom he had too long been influenced), encouraged Pallas to pull Juno's cap a bit, and set it to rights for her; in other words, who took the liberty to teach majesty wisdom, which was in very great danger of being banished from court.

Then there is, above all others, Young Spain, who, however, is quite old enough to know better, and quite strong enough to go alone, if he could but hit upon the right direction to go in, instead of being for ever a child "in arms"—restless, raging, and rabid; appeasable scarcely, in these turbulent days, by the long irresistible charm of the guitar or the cigar. As for that Ursa-

Minor, Young Russia, it is likely enough that he might attempt to set Europe on fire, if he could but succeed in lighting his icicle by way of torch in the first instance; but there is no better reason for being afraid of him than of Young Turkey, who, for aught we know, is but a goose; or Young Holland, who has probably just acquired sufficient nimbleness and elasticity to leap halfway across one of his own dykes; or Young China, who, judging by the well-known family qualities, can turn out to be neither more nor less than a chip of the old crockery; or Young America—but concerning him let us be modestly dumb. What Jonathan Junior, will turn out; what proportion of the infant prodigy will be horse, and what part alligator; moreover, what scientific combinations of land and water monstrosities yet undiscovered will enter into his mortal composition; it is at present equally impossible either to guess, calculate, or reckon!

Of the disposition and dimensions of Young England, however, one has a rather more distinct and definite idea; and at this very moment, not for once so ill-timed and intolerable, the united voices of those sons of freedom, my landlady's nine lively, spirited, frolicsome, delightful little darlings, convey to my mind the most animated sense of his identity.

Yes, it is Young England, in his habit as he squalls! As he squalls, falls, calls, and bawls; as he laughs, bellows, shrieks, and squeaks; as he stamps, tumbles, jumps, crashes, and smashes; plying, vigorously and simultaneously, his lungs, heels, toes, and hands; as he clatters at the window, kicks at the door, knocks over the inkstand, tugs off the tablecloth, sweeps down swarms of glasses, breaks headlong through ceilings, tramples on tender toes, pokes out eyes with toasting-forks, flattens noses with family bibles, chokes himself

with sixpences, weakly and absurdly presented to the little monster as bribes for quietness; hides in a sly corner some small article of indispensable necessity to his doting attendant; drops out of window the very thing of all others he was told never to touch; makes his sisters' lives miserable; fills his papa's mind with sad apprehensions for the future; almost breaks his poor mamma's heart once every day; and is, now and always, the sweetest, dearest, most delightful, charming little duck of a child; a darling little love of an angel, sentenced to be affectionately eaten up at least once an hour, and to have a piece rapturously bitten out of his rosy, round cheek every five minutes; the pride of its father's soul, and the joy of its mother's fond and nurturing breast; a pretty cherub, a love-bird, and a poppet; lastly, in the expressive language of the nursery, which no language beside has endearing epithets to equal, a ducksy-diddly!

Yes, this must be Young England! Young England all the land over. Before he could speak a word of English, I knew the young plague. I know him still by his sobs and by his screams, and by the sound of the tea-cups he breaks, and by his peg-tops, and by the stamp of his feet overhead; his small, tiny, tremendous, never-tiring feet, which clatter incessantly, as if restless with internal iron; iron that had entered into his sole; or as if shod, like Don Gusman's statue, with real marble.

There, you hear him overhead now; like fifty Mat-o'-the-Mints dancing hornpipes in fetters. Five hundred pairs of spurs giving note of march along the pavement at the Horse-Guards, would make less noise. There's Young England for you; only four years old!

Powers of deafness, defend me; what a cry was there! In the name of Niagara, with its torrents of tears, and

its sky-rending roar, what can be the matter with its little human imitator, Young England? Why, his heart will burst with its overcharge of grief; his cheeks crack; his eyes will be fairly washed out of his head. What can be the matter?

"Hurgh! hurgh! hurgh! urgh! ugh! oo!"

What *can* be the matter? Speak, little afflicted! Angelic agitator, answer! What is your grievous trouble? Vain question; the child will not be able to articulate a single syllable for a good half-hour at least.

"Hurgh, hurgh, hurgh! urgh, ugh, oo! oo-oo-o!"

What a horrid noise, as bad as the clatter overhead! But it's a change to be sure; that's some relief. "Urgh, ugh, oo-oo!" The convulsed and choking sound abates —"Ugh, oo!"

Now we shall get an explanation directly, touching this sudden and mysterious explosion of infant sorrow. What *can* have caused it? How the anxious, trembling, doting mother questions her sobbing darling. What has happened to him? who has hurt him? did he fall down? what was it that terrified him? And he is tenderly searched all over to see whether that careless Charlotte had not placed a cruel pin somewhere to run into his dear, sweet flesh. No, no such thing; and as the hysterical emotion subsides, the little bits of broken words creep out, and supply the solution to the mystery.

"Ugh, ugh, oo! I offered Fanny one of my apples, *and she took it*—oo-oo!"

This is one feature of the character of Young England, plain as the nose on his face. He has no objection to make a generous offer, provided it is not accepted; but to take, with a beautiful confidence, the apple frankly held out, breaks his tender little heart; he cannot stand that. Young England will sometimes cry about such a peace of treachery and disappointment for half an hour,

in most musical accents; accompanying himself all the time on the bread-and-butter, an instrument he is remarkably fond of performing on at all hours of the day.

My landlady took her nine small innocents to the play on one occasion, an actor of her acquaintance having given them some orders. A terrible noise of weeping and gnashing of teeth they made, the play being a "deep" tragedy, and the performer, who had bountifully bestowed upon them the free admissions, being sentenced in the last act to death. The eldest of the innocents was dreadfully affected by this catastrophe. The soothing system was tried by the mamma, but in vain; the little mourner would not be comforted. The reality of the scene overcame her; and it was quite absurd to keep nudging and crying "hush."

With a burst of affliction, heard in the centre of the pit, she exclaimed, "Oh, they 're going to put him to death!—he 'll never give us *any more orders!*"

This opens to view another feature of Young England's character. The dear little fellow is extremely tender and compassionate; his nature overflows with the milk of sympathy sometimes; but it must be confessed, that while he fills one eye with the pure waters of humanity, he is apt enough to turn the other in the direction of the main chance.

My landlady's sympathetic sample of the Young England tribe, may be taken as a tolerably unexaggerated representative of an older class of sympathisers, common to all countries, and assuredly not scarce in our own. They grieve over the tragic occurrences of a play, though they never shed a tear over the more piteous events of real life; they mistake the fictitious for the true, and are the dupes of their own bewildering ignorance; they mourn the apparently dying actor, because they can never again borrow his "bones."

Young England, moreover, sometimes proves himself to be a profound philosopher. Having shewn how capable the juvenile prodigy may on occasion be, of indulging an inexpensive generosity by proffering what is not intended to be parted with, and of swelling with a fine humanity in the contemplation of favours never to be renewed, I can cite from the same stock an example of philosophy further removed from the influence of selfish passions, and raised indeed out of the ridiculous into the sublime, which is said to neighbour it.

One of my landlady's nine juveniles happens, by some rare chance, to be an extremely quiet shoot from the Young England plant; and when the wee philosopher, after giving her luckless little guinea-pig a precious hug the other day, saw it drop out of her fond arms, and lie perfectly motionless on the floor, what did she do? Did she burst out into a bellow, over the loss of her foolish little favourite, as though all Noah's ark had been drowned? Did she storm and shriek; summon all the servants, and affright all the neighbourhood; break her affectionate heart in sorrow and remorse; or charge sister Jane with having squeezed the dear thing to death for the purpose?

No; so far from crying herself hoarse, and winning from the maternal lips promises of new frocks and lapfuls of sweetmeats; so far from rubbing into her pretty eyes an unnatural redness, putting her hair out of curl, and her governess out of temper; she committed not a whimper, perpetrated no tear, but looked quietly on for a few seconds, as the poor guinea-pig lay breathless at her feet, and said, like a philosopher, indeed!—"Oh, mamma, *it has stopped!*"

It has stopped! We should just like to know upon what occasion philosophic *Old* England ever arrived at a profounder conclusion in a similar case. Instinct,

feeling, veins, nerves, lungs, limbs, "senses, affections, dimensions, passions;" these ceased in the machine called the guinea-pig. "It has stopped!" Assuredly Young England may live to pity and blush for his parentage; to become, in short, a philosopher of the first water. He will be found packing a quart of wine into a pint bottle some of these days; a prediction on my part which is rendered all the easier by his present dexterity (observable in so many well-managed and charming families) in turning the house completely out of window.

Who remembers not the token of future excellence in statesmanship, which, on behalf of Young England, is promised in the story of the clever young master, who having dropped his drum-stick in the well, called in vain upon the servants to go down and bring it up; and thence fell upon the expedient of throwing down the silver spoons, which would infallibly compel a journey for their restoration.

"By-the-bye, John, now you are down there, you may as well bring up my drum-stick with you."

Young England will no doubt make a magnificent minister some day; but, at the present moment, it would be quite as agreeable if he did not make so much noise about it; and it is particularly desirable that he should allow the *drum-stick* to remain as long as possible at the bottom of the well.

It is probable, moreover, that Young England will turn out, in the process of time, to be a superior courtier, a more accomplished gallant than his predecessors. One of my landlady's youngsters, arrived at the ripe and knowing age of seven, received on Wednesday from his scientific innamorata, of the same age, at Brighton, the offer of a choice collection of sea-weed, "in the event of his caring about such things." What was

Young England's reply? A hint that gingerbread retained a more seductive charm?—that tops held possession of his soul?—that fishing-rods, birds'-nests, and ring-taw, engrossed his juvenile regards? Not so; his answer was a model for the courtier and the lover:

"You say that you will form, with your fair hands, a collection, if I *care* about it. I can only reply, that without sea-weed *life would be a blank!*"

Why, the declaration breathes the very soul of a refined and polished insincerity. What may not be expected from Young England at seventy, instead of seven?

> "All hosts shall hail him with deserved acclaim,
> And cry, this chief transcends his father's fame!"

Old England will certainly undergo the operation of an eclipse. The Young One is already older in everything, except in age. His father and mother are two Negatives, who have made an Affirmative.

* * * Thunderbolts and penny-trumpets, what a mingling of the roar and the squeak! Young England is going-it upstairs. There is the living reality of Hood's ideal; the "flabby-dabby babby," taxing its dear little lungs to an extent that gives the lie direct to the maxim, "There's nothing like leather;" and uniting its darling little voice to the rampant riotousness of the eight hopeful seniors. All the tuneful nine are jumping and jabbering, screaming, tearing, smashing, crashing, laughing, crying; and at once, all at once! Why, the waters coming down at Lodore must have burst upon the roof of the building, and are now bounding to its base. Southey only can describe the conflict, with its—

> "Rattling and battling,
> And tossing and crossing,
> And running and stunning,
> And dinning and spinning,

And dropping and hopping,
Dividing, and gliding, and sliding,
And falling, and bawling, and sprawling,
And driving, and riving, and striving,
And grumbling, and rumbling, and tumbling,
And clattering, and battering, and shattering.
Delaying, and straying, and playing, and spraying,
Advancing, and prancing, and glancing, and dancing,
And flapping, and rapping, and clapping, and slapping,
And thumping, and bumping, and plumping, and jumping."

And as the famous song of the Cataract closes its characteristic accumulation of echoes:

"All at once, and all o'er, with a mighty uproar,
And this way the water comes down at Lodore."

So descends the roar, an abominable bore, upon my unfortunate first-floor!

Only Young England! Why it must be Young Europe at the least, with those wild young dogs Asia, Africa, and America, barking at his heels, and the pup Australia yelping feebly in the distance!

How miraculous! The ceiling has not yet come down, no more does my landlady; no, nor any semblance of a servant. How should they? How answer a bell which they can't hear? St. Paul's set tolling on the staircase would be a thing inaudible.

As to hearing one's-self speak, I can hardly see myself write. And yet there are but nine of them! What then must be the roar and commotion in that building of a forty-Babel power; a preparatory seminary, dedicated to Young England!

Some French writer has given expression to the joy he feels whenever he hears a child cry; because, as he remarks, it is then sure to be taken out of the room: a shallow observation; the French are rarely profound. Of what possible use would it be to take my landlady's nine children out of the room above; for, strange to

say, it is still *above*. Or out of the house? or the parish? The Frenchman would still hear them!

Hark!—but that is of no use; there is too much noise to admit of listening: and yet, how marvellously the accustomed ear discriminates, and detects the various sounds blended in the hubbub. One of the Young English is on a rocking-horse, and one is blessed with a drum, which must certainly be of orchestral proportions; one is, beyond question, spinning his top; and another is, past all doubt, crying out lustily for it. Most distinctly can the experienced sense discover a young lady, with anything but slippers on, practising her skipping-rope; and as clearly may be heard, amidst the exquisite and perfect confusion, the sharp, shrill, continual notes of two undeafened attendants of the softer sex, engaged in an interminable duet, of which the first part says, "What a naughty boy!" and the second, "You little darling!"

Yes, and now, audibly in the midst of the wild dissonance and uproar, I can catch the mild, pleasing, affectionate twang of the maternal voice; the fond accents of my landlady herself, like the sea-music of the note of Mother Carey calling to her pretty chickens in the storm. What does she say?

"Ah, my sweet babes, so you are all merry-making together; I thought, as I came upstairs, I could *hear your voices!*" Dear young middle-aged lady! It was only a mother; and a fond one, too; who could have said that. She could just hear her cherubs flutter their tiny wings, as she came up! What fine ears a mother's heart has!

Smash, crash! That was a sound of glass. Master Tom, the top-spinner, has had a mull; and the top itself has flown through a large pane into the street, falling with destructive force upon the large family-pie

which the baker, board on head, was just bringing to the door. And now, what a shout lifts up the roof of the house! what peals of ecstasy celebrate the exploit! But the soft voice of my landlady is not quite drowned either:

"My darling boy," it says, "what charming spirits you have! but don't break the windows, in case the draught should give you cold."

If Young England in general should, in the slightest degree, resemble my landlady's lot in particular, why then I wish the Prince of Wales joy of his future subjects. They will be sure to make a noise in the world; and whoever may be the minister that shall have their "voices" in his favour, he will be stunned—that 's all!

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